

My Appeal to the British

By

MAHATMA GANDHI



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PREFACE

The appeal to the British contained in the pages of this *Brochure* is as true as it is timely. It remains to be seen whether it finds an echo in the British heart.

But whether the Britishers respond to this appeal or remain insular as ever, it is not without tremendous significance for us, Indians.

To us, indeed, it is a clarion call to duty—duty to fight for the freedom and the honour of our dear country, if the appeal goes unheeded.

May God vouchsafe wisdom to the rulers to undo the wrong they have done to the entire Indian humanity by keeping it under subjection for the last two centuries, and grant courage of non-violent action to all of us, who would rather perish than submit to such a standing humiliation.

ANAND T. HINGORANI

Upper Sind Colony, Karachi (Sind)

August 1, 1942

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FOREIGN SOLDIERS IN INDIA

"Whatever the consequences to India, her real safety and Britain's, too, lie in orderly and timely British withdrawal from India. All talk of treaties with the Princes and obligations towards minorities are a British creation designed for the preservation of British rule and British interests. It must melt before the stern reality that faces all of us."

Among the multitude of questions contained in my correspondence is the one referring to the advent of foreign soldiers in India. We have foreign prisoners enough. Now we have promise of a never-ending stream of soldiers from America and possibly China. I must confess that I do not look upon this event with equanimity. Cannot a limitless number of soldiers be trained out of India's millions? Would they not make as good fighting material as any in the world? Then, why foreigners? We know what American aid means. It amounts in the end to American influence, if not American rule added to British. It is a tremendous price to pay for the possible success of Allied arms. I see no Indian freedom peeping through all this preparation for the so-called defence of India. It is a preparation, pure and simple, for the defence of the British Empire, whatever may be asserted to the contrary. If the British left India to her fate, as they had to leave Singapore, non-violent India would not lose anything. Probably, the Japanese would leave India alone. Perhaps, India, if the main parties composed their differences as they probably would, would be able effectively to help China in the way of peace and in the long run may even play a decisive part in the promotion of world peace. But all these happy things may not happen, if the British will leave India only when they must. How much more creditable, how much braver it would be for Britain to offer battle in the West and leave the East to adjust her own position! There is no guarantee that she

will be able to protect, during this war, all her vast possessions. They have become a dead-weight round her. If she wisely loosens herself from this weight, and the Nazis, the Fascists or the Japanese, instead of leaving India alone, choose to subjugate her, they will find that they have to hold more than they can in their iron hoop. They will find it much more difficult than Britain has. Their very rigidity will strangle them. The British system had an elasticity which served so long as it had no powerful rivals. British elasticity is of no help to-day. I have said more than once in these columns that the Nazi Power had risen as a nemesis to punish Britain for her sins of exploitation and enslavement of the Asian and African races.

Whatever the consequences, therefore, to India, her real safety and Britain's, too, lie in orderly and timely British withdrawal from India. All talk of treaties with the Princes and obligations towards minorities are a British creation designed for the preservation of British rule and British interests. It must melt before the stern reality that faces all of us. Princes, in so far as they rely upon their armed strength, are more than able to defend themselves against unarmed India. The notion of majority and minority will vanish like the mist before the morning sun of liberty. Truth to tell, there will be neither majority nor minority in the absence of the paralyzing British arms. The millions of India would, then, be an undivided but one mass of humanity. I have no doubt that at that time the natural leaders will have wisdom enough to evolve an honourable solution of their difficulties. This presupposes Japan and other powers leaving India alone. If they do not, I should hope even then for wisdom to guide the principal parties to devise a scheme whereby they can act with one mind to face the new menace.

Holding the views I do, it is clear why I look upon intervention of foreign soldiers as a positive danger, thoroughly to be detested and disusted. The present state of things and the attempt to uphold it are a distinct sign of standing consumption of the body politic in India.

ARE YOU NOT INVITING JAPANESE?

"If the British wisely decided to withdraw and leave India to manage her own affairs in the best way she could, the Japanese would be bound to reconsider their plans. The very novelty of the British stroke will confound the Japanese....."

Q. It is all very well for you to invite bravery, but are you not inviting the Japanese to attack India by asking the British rulers to withdraw?

A. I am not. I feel convinced that the British presence is the incentive for the Japanese attack. If the British wisely decided to withdraw and leave India to manage her own affairs in the best way she could, the Japanese would be bound to reconsider their plans. The very novelty of the British stroke will confound the Japanese, dissolve the subdued hatred against the British, and the atmosphere will be set up for the ending of an unnatural state of things that has dominated and choked Indian life. As far as I can see, the Japanese seem to have made their plans independently of Indian opinion. They are not to be affected by any writing of mine. But they will be confounded by the action I have advised.

ONE THING NEEDFUL

"The presence of the British in India is an invitation to Japan to invade India. Their withdrawal removes the bait. Assume, however, that it does not; then India will be better able to cope with the invasion. Unconditional non-cooperation will then have full sway."

"To those of us who love India and Indians and have tried to serve her people faithfully, the fact that in our hour of distress the hatred against us is growing is a matter of infinite sorrow. I admit we have not played and are still not playing fair by India; but can two wrongs make a right? When even the 'enemy' is in due distress, should he not be given some quarter? In asking us to withdraw, are you not inviting your own people to hand the keys to Japan, knowing full well that you have not the non-violent strength as a country to resist any foreign aggression or domination? If you had but it, we could never have sent our hand on you. Will you not forgive past sins and rely on the good-will of the new generation of Englishmen and women who can no longer think in terms of Empire? Among you, among the Congress leaders, is there anyone who believes wholeheartedly in non-violence? Yours is the only logical position, and you alone are a real friend of Britain."

This is an epitome of a pathetic English letter. I can but repeat what I felt and said in my letter to Lord Linlithgow recording my impressions of the first interview with him after the declaration of war. I have nothing to withdraw, nothing to repent of. I remain the same friend to-day of the British that I was then. I have not a trace of hatred in me towards them. But I have never been blind to their limitations as I have not been to their great virtues.

I do not deny the existence of hatred among the people at large, nor its increase with the march of events. But I claim that my national prescription has kept it under subjection and even sterilized it to an extent.

I am convinced, therefore, that the time has come during the war, not after it, for the British and the Indians

to be reconciled to complete separation from each other. That way and that way alone lies the safety of both and, shall I say the world. I see with the naked eye that the estrangement is growing. Every act of the British Government is being interpreted, and I think rightly, as being in its own interest and for its own safety. There is no such thing as joint common interest. To take the extreme case, a British victory over the Japanese will not mean a victory for India. But that is not a near event. Meanwhile, the introduction of foreign soldiers, the admitted inequalities of treatment of Indian and European evacuees, and the manifestly overbearing behaviour of the troops are adding to the distrust of British intentions and declarations. I feel that they cannot all of a sudden change their traditional nature. Racial superiority is treated not as a vice but a virtue. This is true not only in India; it is equally true in Africa, it is true in Burma and Ceylon. Those countries could not be held otherwise than by assertion of race superiority.

This is a drastic disease requiring a drastic remedy. I have pointed the remedy—complete and immediate orderly withdrawal of the British from India at least, in reality and properly from all non-European possessions. It will be the bravest and the cleanest act of the British people. It will at once put the Allied cause on a completely moral basis and may even lead to a most honourable peace between the warring nations. And the clean end of Imperialism is likely to be the end of Fascism and Nazism. The suggested action will certainly blunt the edge of Fascism and Nazism which are an offshoot of Imperialism.

British distress cannot be relieved by nationalist India's aid in the manner suggested by the writer. It is ill-equipped for the purpose, even if it can be made enthusiastic about it. And what is there to enthuse nationalistic India? Just as a person cannot feel the glow of the sun's heat in its absence, even so India cannot feel the glow of freedom without the actual experience of it. Many of us simply cannot contemplate an utterly free India with calmness and equanimity. The first experience is

likely to be a shock before the glow comes. That shock is a necessity. India is a mighty nation. No one can tell how she will act and with what effect when the shock is delivered.

I feel, therefore, that I must devote the whole of my energy to the realization of the supreme act. The writer of the letter admits the wrong done to India by the British. I suggest to the writer that the first condition of British success is the present undoing of the wrong. It should precede, not follow, victory. The presence of the British in India is an invitation to Japan to invade India. Their withdrawal removes the bait. Assume, however, that it does not, free India will be better able to cope with the invasion. Unadulterated non-co-operation will, then, have full sway.

TO EVERY BRITON

"I ask every Briton to support me in my appeal to the British at this very hour to retire from every Asiatic and African possession, and, at least, from India. That step is essential for the safety of the world and for the destruction of Nazism and Fascism. In this I include Japan's 'ism' also."

When I had just begun my public career in South Africa, I wrote *An Open Letter to Every Briton in South Africa*. It had its effect. I feel that I should repeat the example at this critical juncture in the history of the world. This time my appeal must be to every Briton in the World. He may be nobody in the counsels of his nation. But in the empire of non-violence every true thought counts, every true voice has its full value. *Vox populi vox dei* is not a copy-book maxim. It is an expression of the solid experience of mankind. But it has one qualification. Its truth is confined to the field of non-violence. Violence can, for the moment, completely frustrate a people's voice. But since I work on the field of non-violence only, every true thought expressed or unexpressed counts for me.

I ask every Briton to support me in my appeal to the British at this very hour to retire from every Asiatic and African possession, and, at least, from India. That step is essential for the safety of the world and for the destruction of Nazism and Fascism. In this I include Japan's 'ism' also. It is a good copy of the two. Acceptance of my appeal will confound all the military plans of all the Axis Powers and even of the military advisers of Great Britain.

If my appeal goes home, I am sure the cost of British interests in India and Africa would be nothing compared to the present ever-growing cost of war to Britain. And when one puts morals in the scales, there is nothing but gain to Britain, India and the world.

Though I ask for their withdrawal from Asia and Africa, let me confine myself for the moment to India. British statesmen talk glibly of India's participation in the war. Now India was never even formally consulted on the declaration of war. Why should it be? India does not belong to Indians. It belongs to the British. It has been called a British possession. The British practically do with it as they like. They make me—an all-war resister—pay a war tax in a variety of ways. Thus, I pay two pice as war tax on every letter I post, one pice on every postcard, and two annas on every wire I send. This is the lightest side of the dismal picture. But it shows British ingenuity. If I was a student of economics, I could produce startling figures as to what India has been made to pay towards the war, apart from what are miscalled voluntary contributions. No contribution made to a conqueror can be truly described as voluntary. What a conqueror the Briton makes! He is well saddled in his seat. I do not exaggerate when I say that a whisper of his wish is promptly answered in India. Britain may, therefore, be said to be at perpetual war with India which she holds by right of conquest and through an army of occupation. How does India profit by this enforced participation in Britain's war? The bravery of Indian soldiers profits India nothing.

Before the Japanese menace overtakes India, India's homesteads are being occupied by British troops—Indian and non-Indian. The dwellers are summarily ejected and expected to shift for themselves. They are paid a paltry vacating expense which carries them nowhere. Their occupation is gone. They have to build their cottages and search for their livelihood. These people do not vacate out of a spirit of patriotism. When this incident was referred to me a few days ago, I wrote in these columns that the dispossessed people should be asked to bear their lot with resignation. But my co-workers protested and invited me to go to the evacuees and console them myself or send some one to perform the impossible task. They were right. These poor people should never have been treated as they were. They should have been lodged

suitably at the same time that they were asked to vacate.

People in East Bengal may almost be regarded as amphibious. They live partly on land and partly on the waters of the rivers. They have light canoes which enable them to go from place to place. For fear of the Japanese using the canoes, the people have been called upon to surrender them. For a Bengali to part with his canoe is almost like painting with his life. So those who take away his canoe, he regards as his enemy.

Great Britain has to win the war. Need she do so at India's expense? Should she do so?

But I have something more to add to this sad chapter. The falsity that envelops Indian life is suffocating. Almost every Indian you meet is discontented. But he will not own it publicly. The Government employees, high and low, are no exception. I am not giving hearsay evidence. Many British officials know this. But they have evolved the art of taking work from such elements. This all-pervading distrust and falsity make life worthless, unless one resists it with one's whole soul.

You may refuse to believe all I say. Of course, I shall be contradicted. I shall survive the contradictions.

I have stated what I believe to be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

My people may or may not approve of this loud thinking. I have consulted nobody. This appeal is being written during my silence day. I am just now concerned with Britain's action. When slavery was abolished in America, many slaves protested, some even wept. But protests and tears notwithstanding, slavery was abolished in law. But the abolition was the result of a bloody war between the South and the North; and so though the Negro's lot is considerably better than before, he still remains the outcaste of high society. I am asking for something much higher. I ask for a bloodless end of an unnatural domination and for a new era, even though there may be protests and wailings from some of us.

CONFUSION

"India has no quarrel with the British people. I have hundreds of British friends. Andrew's friendship was enough to tie me to the British people. But both he and I were fixed in our determination that British rule in India, in any shape or form, must end."

There is evidently confusion in some minds about my invitation to the British to withdraw. For, a Britisher writes to say that he likes India and her people and would not like willingly to leave India. He likes, too, my method of non-violence. Evidently, the writer has confused the individual as such with the individual as the holder of power. India has no quarrel with the British people. I have hundreds of British friends. Andrew's friendship was enough to tie me to the British people. But both he and I were fixed in our determination that British rule in India, in any shape or form, must end. Hitherto the rulers have said: "We would gladly retire if we know to whom we should hand over the reins." My answer now is: "Leave India to God. If that is too much, then leave her to anarchy."

I invite every Britisher who loves Britain, India and the world to join me in the appeal to the British Power and, if it is rejected, to adopt such non-violent measures as would compel the Power to comply with the appeal.

IMPLICATIONS OF WITHDRAWAL

"It has cost me much to come to the conclusion that the British should withdraw from India, and it is costing me still more to work out that conclusion. It is like asking loved ones to part, but it has become a paramount duty."

The following are the questions put by a representative of The News Chronicle (London) to Gandhiji at Bombay and the latter's replies to them:

Q. You have recently asked the British to withdraw from India. Do you think it possible in the present circumstances for them to withdraw all at once? To whom are they to entrust the administration?

A. It has cost me much to come to the conclusion that the British should withdraw from India, and it is costing me still more to work out that conclusion. It is like asking loved ones to part, but it has become a paramount duty. And the beauty and the necessity for withdrawal lie in its being immediate. They and we are both in the midst of fire. If they go, there is a likelihood of both of us being safe. If they do not, Heaven only knows what will happen. I have said in the plainest terms that in my proposal there is no question of entrusting the administration to any person or party. That would be a necessary consideration, if the withdrawal was part of a settlement. Under my proposal, they have to leave India in God's hands—but in modern parlance to anarchy, and that anarchy may lead to internecine warfare for a time or to unrestrained dacoities. From these, a true India will rise in the place of the false one we see.

Q. How is your policy of non-embarrassment reconcilable with this advice?

A. My policy of non-embarrassment remains intact in terms in which I have described it. If the British withdraw, surely, there is no embarrassment; not only so,

they become eased of a tremendous burden, if they would calmly consider the meaning of the enslavement of a whole people. But if they persist, well knowing that they are surrounded by hatred, they invite embarrassment. I do not produce it by stating the truth, however unpalatable it may appear for the moment.

Q. Already there are signs of civil insecurity; and would not life be even more insecure, were the present administration suddenly to withdraw?

A. Of course, there is civil insecurity, and I have already confessed that insecurity is likely to increase very much only to give place to real security. The present insecurity is chronic and, therefore, not so much felt. But a disease that is not felt is worse than one that is felt.

Q. Were the Japanese to invade India, what would your advice be to the Indian people?

A. I have already said in my articles that it is just likely that the Japanese will not want to invade India, their prey having gone. But it is equally likely that they will want to invade India in order to use her ports for strategic purposes. Then, I would advise the people to do the same thing that I have advised them to do now, *viz.*, offer stubborn non-violent non-co-operation, and I make bold to say that, if the British withdraw and people here follow my advice, then non-co-operation will be infinitely more effective than it can be to-day, when it cannot be appreciated for the violent British action going on side by side.

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

"I will do nothing in haste, but there is the fixed determination behind every act of mine that the British must withdraw."

Explaining at a Press Conference at Bombay the implications of his suggestion to the British to withdraw from India, Gandhiji answered some important questions as follows:

NON-VIOLENT NON-CO-OPERATION

Q. There is a report about some new scheme that you want to propound in one of your *Harijan* articles about non-violent non-co-operation if any invader came to India. Could you give us an idea?

A. It is wrong. I have no plan in mind. If I had, I should give it to you. But I think nothing more need be added when I have said that there should be unadulterated non-violent non-co-operation, and if the whole of India responded and unanimously offered it, I should show that, without shedding a single drop of blood, Japanese arms—or any combination of arms—can be sterilized. That involves the determination of India not to give quarter on any point whatsoever and to be ready to risk loss of several million lives. But I would consider that cost very cheap and victory won at that cost glorious. That India may not be ready to pay that price may be true. I hope it is not true, but some such price must be paid by any country that wants to retain its independence. After all, the sacrifice made by the Russians and the Chinese is enormous, and they are ready to risk all. The same could be said of the other countries also, whether aggressors or defenders. The cost is enormous. Therefore, in the non-violent technique I am asking India to risk no more than other countries are risking and which India would have to risk even if she offered armed resistance.

Q. But unadulterated non-violent non-co-operation has not been successful against Great Britain. How will it succeed against a new aggressor?

A. I combat the statement altogether. Nobody has yet told me that non-violent non-co-operation, unadulterated, has not succeeded. It has not been offered, it is true. Therefore, you can say that what has not been offered hitherto is not likely to be offered suddenly when India faces the Japanese arms. I can only hope that, in the face of danger, India would be readier to offer non-violent non-co-operation. Perhaps, India is accustomed to British rule for so many years that the Indian minds or India's masses do not feel the pinch so much as the advent of a new power would be felt. But your question is well put. It is possible that India may not be able to offer non-violent non-co-operation. But a similar question may be put regarding armed resistance. Several attempts have been made and they have not succeeded. Therefore, it will not succeed against the Japanese. That leads us to the absurd conclusion that India will never be ready for gaining independence, and seeing that I cannot subscribe to any such proposition, I must try again and again till India is ready to respond to the call of non-violent non-co-operation. But if India does not respond to that call, then India must respond to the call of some leader or some organization, wedded to violence. For instance, the Hindu Mahasabha is trying to rouse the Hindu mind for an armed conflict. It remains to be seen whether that attempt succeeds. I for one do not believe it will succeed.

SCORCHED EARTH POLICY

Q. Would you advise non-violent non-co-operation against scorched earth policy? Would you resist the attempt to destroy sources of food and water?

A. Yes, a time may come when I would certainly advise it, for I think it is ruinous, suicidal, and unnecessary—whether India believes in non-violent non-co-operation or in violence. And the Russian and Chinese examples make no appeal to me. If some other country resorts to methods which I consider to be inhuman, I may not follow them. If the enemy comes and helps himself to crops I may be obliged to leave, because I cannot or care not to defend them, I must resign myself to it. And

there is a good example for us. A passage was quoted to me from the Islamic literature. The *Khalifs* issued definite instructions to the armies of Islam that they should not destroy the utility services, they should not harass the aged and women and children; and I do not know that the arms of Islam suffered any disaster because the armies obeyed those instructions.

Q. But what about factories—especially factories for the manufacture of munitions?

A. Suppose there are factories for grinding wheat or pressing oil-seeds. I should not destroy them. But munitions factories, yes; for I would not tolerate munitions factories in a free India, if I had my way. Textile factories I would not destroy and would resist all such destruction. However, it is a question of prudence.

I have not suggested immediate enforcement of the whole programme in pursuance of the demand for British withdrawal. It is there, of course. But I am trying, if I am allowed to continue to cultivate and educate public opinion, to show that behind this demand of mine there is no ill-will, no malice. It is the most logical thing that I have suggested. It is in the interests of all, and since it is an entirely friendly act, I am moving cautiously, watching myself at every step. I will do nothing in haste, but there is the fixed determination behind every act of mine that the British must withdraw.

I have mentioned anarchy. I am convinced that we are living to-day in a state of ordered anarchy. It is a misnomer to call such rule as is established in India a rule which promotes the welfare of India. Therefore, this ordered disciplined anarchy should go, and if there is complete lawlessness in India, as a result, I would risk it, though I believe, and I should like to believe, that 22 years of continuous effort at educating India along the lines of non-violence will not have gone in vain, and people will evolve real popular order out of chaos. Therefore, if I find that all the best effort fails, I would certainly invite people to resist destruction of their property.

NON MORAL SUPPORT TO BRITAIN OR AMERICA

Q. Can India give her moral sympathy or support to either of the parties to the war?

A. My own personal view is well known. And if I can convert India to my view, there would be no aid to either side; but my sympathies are undoubtedly in favour of China and Russia.

Q. But what about Britain?

A. I used to say that my moral support was entirely with Britain. I am very sorry to have to confess that to-day my mind refuses to give that moral support. British behaviour towards India has filled me with great pain. I was not quite prepared for Mr. Amery's performances or Sir Stafford Cripps' mission. These have, in my estimation, put Britain morally in the wrong. And, therefore, though I do not wish any humiliation to Britain—and, therefore, no defeat—my mind refuses to give her any moral support.

Q. What about America?

A. I expressed my opinion sometime ago that it was a wrong thing for America and unfortunate for the world peace that America, instead of working—as she could have worked—for peace, identified herself with war.

Q. But was there any alternative for her?

A. I am sure she would have, if she had intended, brought about peace. But it is my firm opinion that she did not use her opportunity. I know that I have no right to criticize such a big nation. I do not know all the facts that determined America to throw herself into the cauldron. But somehow or other, opinion has forced itself upon me that America could have remained out, and even now it can do so if she divests herself of the intoxication that her immense wealth has produced. And I would like to repeat what I have said about the withdrawal of British Power from India. Both America and

Britain lack the moral basis for engaging in this war, unless they put their own houses in order, while making a fixed determination to withdraw their influence and power both from Africa and Asia, and remove the colour bar. They have no right to talk about protecting democracies and protecting civilization and human freedom until the canker of white superiority is destroyed in its entirety.

FRIENDLY ADVICE

"Withdrawal of the hated power is the only way to rid the land of the debasing hatred. The cause gone, hatred must cease."

Thus reasons a friend:

"Most people will agree with you that Britain's inability to play fair by India deprives them of the right to expect even our moral support. Ideologically also, most people will agree with you that their only honourable course would be to withdraw from India. But inevitably the withdrawal will confront us with immense difficulties which you yourself have admitted. You say you are willing to take all risks. Every brave man is. At the same time is it not your duty to prepare the ground up to a point so as to minimize the risks as far as possible? The people must, for instance, be made to shed cowardice and feel that it is possible for us to stand on our own legs. They must not desire, as so many do, Japanese help or even submit to Japanese domination as they would have to, if that help were taken. They must be weaned, as far as possible, from hatred of the British. And, then, every effort must be made to secure Muslim support. This is your last and supreme effort to bring freedom to India. Let no step be taken in haste or without due preparation. The time is too critical to bear failure."

As these columns show, with the overwhelming sense of the truth, as it appears to me, I am taking every care humanly possible to prepare the ground. I know that the novelty of the idea, and that too at this juncture, has caused a shock to many people. But I could not help myself. Even at the risk of being called mad, I had to tell the truth if I was to be true to myself. I regarded it as my solid contribution to the war and to India's deliverance from the peril that is and the peril that is threatening. It is, too, my real contribution to communal unity. No one can visualize what it will be like. Only it will not be the sham we have had up to now. It has touched only the few politically minded people.

The masses have remained unaffected by it.

Whilst, therefore, I will take every imaginable care consistent with the urgency, I cannot guarantee freedom from cowardice before taking any forward step. The cowardice will probably not be shed without much travail. Nor is waiting possible, till hatred abates. Withdrawal of the hated power is the only way to rid the land of the debasing hatred. The cause gone, hatred must cease.

Of course, the people must not, on any account, lean on the Japanese to get rid of the British Power. That were a remedy worse than the disease. But, as I have already said, in this struggle every risk has to be run in order to cure ourselves of the biggest disease—a disease which has sapped our manhood and almost made us feel as if we must for ever be slaves. It is an insufferable thing. The cost of the cure, I know, will be heavy. No price is too heavy to pay for the deliverance.

OUT OF TOUCH

"British presence invites the Japanese, it promotes communal disunion and other discords, and what is, perhaps, the worst of all, deepens the hatred born of impotence. Orderly British withdrawal will turn the hatred into affection and will automatically remove communal distemper."

Q. Do you know, being confined in Sevagram, how much you are out of touch with the public? If you were not, you would not talk of resisting the Japanese as you do. For, the dislike of the British is so great that man in the street is ready to welcome the Japanese.

A. I cannot endorse your proposition that I am out of touch with the public. Though I am confined in Sevagram, I see all sorts of people and receive correspondence from every nook and corner of India. Probably, therefore, I am more in touch with the people than you can be, though living in a big town. You have not the opportunity that I have of gauging the public mind. But let us grant that what you say is right, (I believe you are partially right,) my suppressing the true remedy will not alter the public mind. On the contrary, I am showing the futility of hatred. I am showing that hatred injures the hater, never the hated. An Imperial Power cannot act otherwise than it has been doing. If we are strong, the British become powerless. I am, therefore, trying to wean the people from their hatred by asking them to develop the strength of mind to invite the British to withdraw and at the same time to resist the Japanese. With the British withdrawal the incentive to welcome the Japanese goes, and the strength felt in securing British withdrawal will be used for stemming the Japanese inroad. I endorse C. R.'s proposition that the millions of India can resist the Japanese even without the possession of arms, modern and ancient, if they are properly organized. I differ from him

when he says that this can be done even when the British arms are operating without co-ordination when you force yourself on the British Power. Experience teaches us that hearty co-ordination and co-operation is impossible where mutual trust and respect are wanting. British presence invites the Japanese, it promotes communal disunion and other discords, and what is, perhaps, the worst of all, deepens the hatred born of impotence. Orderly British withdrawal will turn the hatred into affection and will automatically remove communal distemper. So far as I can see, the two communities are unable to think or see things in their proper perspective as long as they are under the influence of the third power.

FREE INDIA CAN HELP BEST

"If British Power is withdrawn from India in an orderly manner, Britain will be relieved of the burden of keeping the peace in India, and at the same time gain in a free India an ally not in the cause of Empire—because she would have renounced in toto all her imperial designs—but in a defence, not pretended but wholly real, of human freedom."

Answering to the question of a Press correspondent whether his present policy, as revealed by his writings, did not vitiate his own declaration that he was a friend of China, Gandhiji said:

My answer is an emphatic 'no'. I remain the passionate friend of China that I have always claimed to be. I know what loss of freedom means. Therefore, I could not but be in sympathy with China which is my next-door neighbour in distress. And, if I believed in violence and if I could influence India, I would put in motion every force at my command on behalf of China to save her liberty. In making, therefore, the suggestion which I have made about the withdrawal of British Power, I have not lost sight of China. But because I have China in mind, I feel that the only effective way for India to help China is to persuade Great Britain to free India and let a free India make her full contribution to the war effort. Instead of being sullen and discontented, India free will be a mighty force for the good of mankind in general. It is true that the solution I have presented is a heroic solution beyond the ken of Englishmen. But being a true friend of Britain and China and Russia, I must not suppress the solution which I believe to be eminently practical and probably the only one in order to save the situation, and in order to convert the war into a power for good instead of being what it is, a peril to humanity.

Pandit Nehru told me yesterday that he heard people

in Lahore and Delhi saying that I have turned pro-Japanese. I could only laugh at the suggestion, for, if I am sincere in my passion for freedom, I could not consciously or unconsciously take a step which will involve India in the position of merely changing masters. If, in spite of my resistance to the Japanese menace with my whole soul, the mishap occurs, of which I have never denied the possibility, then the blame would rest wholly on British shoulders. I have no shadow of doubt about it. I have made no suggestion which, even from the military stand-point, is fraught with the slightest danger to British Power or to Chinese. It is obvious that India is not allowed to pull her weight in favour of China. If British Power is withdrawn from India in an orderly manner, Britain will be relieved of the burden of keeping the peace in India, and at the same time gain in a free India an ally not in the cause of Empire—because she would have renounced in toto all her imperial designs—but in a defence, not pretended but wholly real, of human freedom. That I assert and that only is the burden of my recent writings and I shall continue to do so, so long as I am allowed by the British Power.

To the next question of the same correspondent if he had, as reported, any matured plans for launching some big offensive, Gandhiji replied:

Well, I have never believed in secrecy, nor do I do so now. There are certainly many plans floating in my brain. But just now I merely allow them to float in my brain. My first task is to educate the public mind in India and world opinion, in so far as I am allowed to do so. And when I have finished that process to my satisfaction, I may have to do something. That something may be very big, if the Congress is with me and the people are with me. But British authority will have a full knowledge of anything I may wish to do before I enforce it. Remember, I have yet to see the Maulana Saheb.¹ My talks with Pandit Nehru are yet unfinished. I may say that they were

¹ Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

wholly of a friendly nature and we have come nearer to each other even with the unfinished talk of yesterday. Naturally, I want to carry the whole of the Congress with me if I can, as I want to carry the whole of India with me. For, my conception of freedom is no narrow conception. It is co-extensive with the freedom of man in all his majesty. I shall, therefore, take no step without the fullest deliberation.

'NO DECISIVE OPINION'

"I have no decisive opinion about the result of the war. But what is decisive with me is that I am made by nature to side with weak parties. My policy of non-embarrassment is based upon that nature and it persists."

Q. Is it a fact your present attitude towards England and Japan is influenced by the belief that you think the British and the Allies are going to be defeated in this war? It is necessary that you clear the position in this respect. A very important leader in the Congress thinks like that and he says that he is sure because he has this knowledge from his personal talks with you.

A. I wish you could have given the name of the leader. Whoever he is, I have no hesitation in saying that it is not true. On the contrary, I said only the other day in *Harijan* that the Britisher was hard to beat. He has not known what it is to be defeated.¹ Of the Americans, in this very issue you will see my answer to *The Sunday Despatch*.² It contradicts the "leader's"

¹ The recent British reverses ought not to create panic in the land. In all the wars that Britain has fought or in which she has been engaged, there have been reverses some of which may be considered disastrous. But the British have a knack of surviving them and turning them into stepping-stones to success. Hence the saying, peculiar to them, that they blunder through to success. Failures do not dismay or demoralize them. They take them with calmness and in a sportsmanlike spirit. Wars are, for them, a national game like foot-ball. The defeated team heartily congratulates the successful one almost as if it was a joint victory, and drowns the sorrow of defeat in an exchange of glasses of whisky. If we have learnt nothing worth from the contact with the British, let us at least learn their calmness in the face of misfortunes.—*Harijan*: Feb. 22, 1942.

² *The Sunday Despatch of London sent Gandhiji the following cable:*

"You are reported as saying that America could have kept out of the war if she had wished. How can you justify such a statement in view of the fact that, while at peace, America was attacked by the Japanese who simultaneously declared war on her."

To this Gandhiji sent the following reply:

"Cable just received. Evidently you have not my full state-

statements. He, therefore, either misunderstood me or you have misunderstood him. But I have said in my talk for the past twelve months and more that this was not likely to end in a decisive victory for any party. There will be peace when the exhaustion point is reached. This is mere speculation. Britain may be favoured by nature. She has nothing to lose by waiting. And with America as her ally, she has inexhaustible material resources and scientific skill. This advantage is not available to any of the Axis Powers. Thus, I have no decisive opinion about the result of the war. But what is decisive with me is that I am made by nature to side with weak parties. My policy of non-embarrassment is based upon that nature and it persists. My proposal for British withdrawal is as much in Britain's interests as India's. Your difficulty arises from your disinclination to believe that Britain can ever do justice voluntarily. My belief in the capacity of non-violence rejects the theory of permanent inelasticity of human nature.

ment. Part relating to America runs thus: 'I know that I have no right to criticize such a big nation. I don't know all the facts which have determined America to throw herself into the cauldron. But, somehow or other, opinion has forced itself on me that America could have remained out and even now she can do so if she divests herself of intoxication that her immense wealth has produced. And here I would like to repeat what I have said about the withdrawal of the British Power from India. Both America and Britain lack the moral basis for engaging in this war, unless they put their own houses in order by making it their fixed determination to withdraw their influence and power both from Africa and Asia and remove the colour bar. They have no right to talk of protecting democracy and protecting civilization and human freedom until the canker of white superiority is destroyed in its entirety.' I adhere to that statement. How America could have avoided war, I cannot answer except by recommending non-violent method. My American friendships had led me to build high hope on American contribution to peace. America is too big financially, intellectually, and in scientific skill, to be subdued by any nation or even combination. Hence, my tears over her throwing herself in cauldron."

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

"America and Britain are very great nations, but their greatness will count as dust before the bar of dumb humanity, whether African or Asiatic. They and they alone have the power to undo the wrong. They have no right to talk of human liberty and all else, unless they have washed their hands clean of the pollution."

A friend was discussing with me the implications of the new proposal. As the discussion was naturally desultory, I asked him to frame his questions which I would answer through *Harijan*. He agreed and gave me the following:

Q. You ask the British Government to withdraw immediately from India. Would Indians thereupon form a National Government and what groups or parties would participate in such an Indian Government?

A. My proposal is one-sided, *i.e.*, for the British Government to act upon, wholly irrespective of what Indians would do or would not do. I have even assumed temporary chaos on their withdrawal. But if the withdrawal takes place in an orderly manner, it is likely that on their withdrawal a Provisional Government will be set up by and from among the present leaders. But another thing may also happen. All those who have no thought of the nation but only of themselves may make a bid for power and get together the turbulent forces with which they would seek to gain control somewhere and somehow. I should hope that with the complete, final and honest withdrawal of the British Power, the wise leaders will realize their responsibility, forget their differences for the moment and set up a Provisional Government out of the material left by the British Power. As there would be no power regulating the admission or rejection of parties or persons to or from the council

board, restraint alone will be the guide. If that happens, probably, the Congress, the League and the States representatives will be allowed to function and they will come to a loose understanding on the formation of a Provisional National Government. All this is necessarily guess-work and nothing more.

Q. Would that Indian National Government permit the United Nations to use Indian territory as a base of military operations against Japan and other Axis Powers ?

A. Assuming that the National Government is formed and if it answers my expectations, its first act would be to enter into a treaty with the United Nations for defensive operations against aggressive powers, it being common cause that India will have nothing to do with any of the Fascist Powers and India would be morally bound to help the United Nations.¹

Q. What further assistance would this Indian National Government be ready to render the United Nations in the course of the present war against the Fascist aggressors ?

A. If I have any hand in guiding the imagined National Government, there would be no further assistance save the toleration of the United Nations on the Indian soil under well-defined conditions. Naturally, there will be no prohibition against any Indian giving his own personal help by way of being a recruit or and of giving financial aid. It should be understood that the Indian army has been disbanded with the withdrawal of British Power. Again, if I have any say in the councils

¹ *Asked by the Renter's London representative to amplify his statement about the possibility of Free India entering into a treaty with the United Nations, Gandhi said:*

"There can be no limit to what friendly Independent India can do. I had in mind a treaty between United Nations and India for defence of China against Japanese aggression. But given mutual good-will and trust, the treaty should cover protection of human dignity and rights by means other than resort to armament. For, this involves competition in capacity for greatest slaughter. I wish British opinion could realize that Independence of India changes character of Allied cause and ensures speedier victory."—*Harijan*, June 28, 1942

of the National Government, all its power, prestige and resources would be used towards bringing about world peace. But, of course, after the formation of the National Government, my voice may be a voice in the wilderness and nationalist India may go war-mad.

Q. Do you believe this collaboration between Indian and the Allied Powers might or should be formulated in a treaty of alliance or an agreement for mutual aid?

A. I think the question is altogether premature and in any case it will not much matter whether the relations are regulated by treaty or agreement. I do not even see any difference.

Let me sum up my attitude. One thing and only one thing for me is solid and certain. This unnatural prostration of a great nation—it is neither 'nations' nor 'peoples'—must cease, if the victory of the Allies is to be ensured. They lack the moral basis. I see no difference between the Fascist or Nazi Powers and the Allies. All are exploiters, all resort to ruthlessness to the extent required to compass their end. America and Britain are very great nations, but their greatness will count as dust before the bar of dumb humanity, whether African or Asiatic. They and they alone have the power to undo the wrong. They have no right to talk of human liberty and all else, unless they have washed their hands clean of the pollution. That necessary wash will be their surest insurance of success, for they will have the good wishes—unexpressed, but no less certain—of millions of dumb Asiatics and Africans. Then, but not till then, will they be fighting for a new order. This is the reality. All else is speculation. I have allowed myself, however, to indulge in it as a test of my *bonafides* and for the sake of explaining in a concrete manner what I mean by my proposal.

AN IMPORTANT INTERVIEW

"If the whole of India had been non-violent, there would have been no need for my appeal to Britain, nor would there be any fear of a Japanese invasion.....I have no non-violence of millions to present to Britain, and what we have has been discounted by the British as the non-violence of the weak. And so all I have done is to make this appeal on the strength of bare inherent justice, so that it may find an echo in the British heart."

One hot afternoon two American journalists came—Mr. Chaplin of the International News Service, America, and Mr. Belldon representing the *Life and Time*. The latter is fresh from China and Burma. Both had heard rumours in New Delhi that Gandhiji might soon be arrested. So they came post-haste, without even waiting for a reply giving them an appointment.

Gandhiji had just emerged from an intensive talk with another American when these friends came, and so he said greeting them: "One American has been vivisectioning me. I am now at your disposal."

WHY NON-VIOLENT NON-CO-OPERATION?

They had read all kinds of things about Gandhiji's latest move, his own words wrenched from their context, and words written about him. "It is your worst side that is known in New Delhi, and not your best," another journalist had said to Gandhiji, and they were, therefore, anxious to straighten out wrong notions if they had any. Why non-violent non-co-operation, rather than honest straightforward resistance against the Japanese? Far from preventing the Japanese, non-violent non-co-operation, they feared, might prove an invitation to them, and would not that be flying from the frying pan into the fire?

Gandhiji put a counter question in reply:

"Supposing England retires from India for strategic

purposes, and apart from my proposal,—as they had to do in Burma—what would happen? What would India do?"

"That is exactly what we have come to learn from you. We would certainly like to know that."

"Well, therein comes my non-violence. For, we have no weapons. Mind you, we have assumed that the Commander-in-Chief of the united American and British Armies has decided that India is no good as a base, and that they should withdraw to some other base and concentrate the Allied forces there. We can't help it. We have, then, to depend on what strength we have. We have no army, no military resources, no military skill either, worth the name, and non-violence is the only thing we can fall back upon. Now, in theory, I can prove to you that our non-violent resistance can be wholly successful. We need not kill a single Japanese, we simply give them no quarter."

"But that non-violence can't prevent an invasion?"

"In non-violent technique, of course, there can be nothing like preventing an invasion. They will land, but they will land on an inhospitable shore. They may be ruthless and wipe out all the 400 millions. That would be complete victory. I know you will laugh at it, saying 'all this is superhuman, if not absurd.' I would say you are right, we may not be able to stand that terror and we may have to go through a course of subjection worse than our present state. But we are discussing the theory."

"But if the British don't withdraw?"

"I do not want them to withdraw under Indian pressure, nor driven by force of circumstances. I want them to withdraw in their own interest, for their own good name."

"But what happens to your movement, if you are arrested, as we heard you might be? Or, if Mr. Nehru is arrested? Would not the movement go to pieces?"

"No, not if we have worked among the people. Our arrest would work up the movement, they would stir every one in India to do his little bit."

"Supposing Britain decides to fight to the last man in India, would not your non-violent non-co-operation help the Japanese?" asked Mr. Chaplin reverting to the first question he had asked.

"If you mean non-co-operation with the British, you would be right. We have not come to that stage. I do not want to help the Japanese—not even for freeing India. India during the past fifty or more years of her struggle for freedom has learnt the lesson of patriotism and of not bowing to *any* foreign power. But when the British are offering violent battle, our non-violent battle—our non-violent activity—would be neutralized. Those who believe in armed resistance and in helping the British militarily are and will be helping them. Mr. Amery says he is getting all the men and money they need, and he is right. For the Congress—a poor organization representing the millions of the poor of India—has not been able to collect in years what they have collected in a day by way of, what I would say, 'so-called' voluntary subscription. This Congress can only render non-violent assistance. But let me tell you, if you do not know it, that the British do not want it, they don't set any store by it. But whether they do it or not, violent and non-violent resistance cannot go together. So, India's non-violence can at best take the form of silence—not obstructing the British forces, certainly not helping the Japanese."

"But not helping the British?"

"Don't you see non-violence cannot give any other aid?"

"But the railways, I hope, you won't stop; the services, too, will be, I hope, allowed to function."

"They will be allowed to function, as they are being allowed to-day."

"Aren't you, then, helping the British by leaving the services and the railways alone?" asked Mr. Belldon.

"We are, indeed. That is our non-embarrassment policy."

A BAD JOB

"But what about the presence of American troops here? Every American feels that we should help India to win her freedom."

"It's a bad job."

"Because it is said we are here really to help Britain and not India?"

"I say it is a bad job, because it is an imposition on India. It is not at India's request or with India's consent that they are here. It is enough irritation that we were not consulted before being dragged into this war—I am not sure that the Viceroy even consulted his Executive Council. That is our original complaint. To have brought the American forces is, in my opinion, to have made the stranglehold on us all the tighter.

"You do not know what is happening in India—it is naturally not your business to go into those things. But let me give you some facts. Thousands of villagers are being summarily asked to vacate their homes and go elsewhere, for the site of their homesteads is needed by the military. Now I ask, where are they to go? Thousands of poor labourers in a certain place, I have heard to-day, have been asked to evacuate. Paltry compensations are offered them, and they are not even given sufficient notice. This kind of thing will not happen in an independent country. The Sappers and Miners there would first build homes for these people, transport would be provided for them, they would be given at least six months' maintenance allowance before they would be uprooted from their surroundings. Are these things to happen, even before the Japanese have come here? There is no other way, but saying to them: 'You must go;' and if British rule ends, that moral act will save America and Britain. If they choose to remain here, they should remain as friends, not as proprietors of India. The American and British soldiers may remain here, if at all, by virtue of a compact with Free India."

"Don't you think Indian people and leaders have some duty to help accelerate the process?"

"You mean by dotting India with rebellions everywhere? No, my invitation to the British to withdraw is not an idle one. It has to be made good by the sacrifice of the inviters. Public opinion has got to act, and it can act only non-violently."

"Is the possibility of strike precluded?" wondered Mr. Belldon.

"No," said Gandhiji, "strikes can be and have been non-violent. If railways are worked only to strengthen the British hold on India, they need not be assisted. But before I decide to take any energetic measures, I must endeavour to show the reasonableness of my demand. The moment it is complied with, India, instead of being sullen, becomes an ally. Remember, I am more interested than the British in keeping the Japanese out. For, Britain's defeat in Indian waters may mean *only the loss of India*, but if Japan wins India loses *everything*."

THE CRUCIAL TEST.

"If you regard the American troops as an imposition, would you regard the American Technical Mission also in the same light?" was the next question.

"A tree is judged by its fruit," said Gandhiji succinctly. "I have met Dr. Grady, we have had cordial talks. I have no prejudice against Americans. I have hundreds, if not thousands of friends, in America. The Technical Mission may have nothing but good-will for India. But my point is that all the things that are happening are not happening at the invitation or wish of India. Therefore, they are all suspect. We cannot look upon them with philosophic calmness, for the simple reason that we cannot close our eyes, as I have said, to the things that are daily happening in front of our eyes. Areas are being vacated and turned into military camps, people being thrown on their own resources. Hundreds, if not thousands, on their way from Burma perished without food and drink, and the wretched discrimination stared even these miserable people in the face. One route for the whites, another for the blacks. Provision of food and shelter for the whites, none for the blacks! And discri-

mination even on their arrival in India! India is being ground down to dust and humiliated, even before the Japanese advent, not for India's defence—and no one knows for whose defence. And so one fine morning I came to the decision to make this honest demand: 'For Heaven's sake leave India alone. Let us breathe the air of freedom. It may choke us, suffocate us, as it did the slaves on their emancipation. But I want the present sham to end.'

"But it is the British troops you have in mind, not the American?"

"It does not make for me the slightest difference, the whole policy is one and indivisible."

"Is there any hope of Britain listening?"

"I will not die without that hope. And if there is a long lease of life for me, I may even see it fulfilled. For there is nothing unpractical in the proposal, no insuperable difficulties about it. Let me add that if Britain is not willing to do so whole-heartedly, Britain does not deserve to win."

WHAT WOULD FREE INDIA DO?

Gandhiji had over and over again said that an orderly withdrawal would result in a sullen India becoming a friend and ally. These American friends now explored the implications of that possible friendship: "Would a Free India declare war against Japan?"

"Free India need not do so. It simply becomes the ally of the Allied Powers, simply out of gratefulness for the payment of a debt, however overdue. Human nature thanks the debtor when he discharges the debt."

"How, then, would this alliance fit in with India's non-violence?"

"It is a good question. The *whole* of India is not non-violent. If the whole of India had been non-violent, there would have been no need for my appeal to Britain, nor would there be any fear of a Japanese invasion. But my non-violence is represented possibly by a hopeless minority, or, perhaps, by India's dumb millions who are temperamentally non-violent. But there, too, the ques-

tion may be asked: 'What have they done?' They have done nothing, I agree; but they may act when the supreme test comes, and they may not. I have no non-violence of millions to present to Britain, and what we have has been discounted by the British as non-violence of the weak. And so all I have done is to make this appeal on the strength of bare inherent justice, so that it might find an echo in the British heart. It is made from a moral plane, and even as they do not hesitate to act desperately in the physical field and take grave risks, let them for once act desperately on the moral field and declare that India is independent to-day, irrespective of India's demand."

WHAT ABOUT MUSLIMS?

"But what does a Free India mean, if as Mr. Jinnah said, Muslims will not accept Hindu rule?"

"I have not asked the British to hand over India to the Congress or to the Hindus. Let them entrust India to God or, in modern parlance, to anarchy. Then, all the parties will fight one another like dogs, or will, when real responsibility faces them, come to a reasonable agreement. I shall expect non-violence to arise out of that chaos."

"But *whom* are the British to say 'India is free'?" asked the friends with a certain degree of exasperation.

"To the world," said Gandhiji without a moment's hesitation. "Automatically the Indian army is disbanded from that moment, and they decide to pack up as soon as they can. Or, they may declare they would pack up only after the war is over, but that they would expect no help from India, impose no taxes, raise no recruits—beyond what help India chooses to give voluntarily. British rule will cease from that moment, no matter what happens to India afterwards. To-day, it is all a hypocrisy, unreality. I want that to end. The new order will come only when that falsity ends."

"It is an unwarranted claim Britain and America are making," said Gandhiji concluding the talk, "the claim of saving democracy and freedom. It is a wrong thing to make that claim when there is this terrible tragedy of

holding a whole nation in bondage.”

“What can America do to have your demand implemented?”

“If my demand is admitted to be just beyond cavil, America can insist on the implementing of the Indian demand as a condition of her financing Britain and supplying her with her matchless skill in making war machines. He who pays the piper has the right to call the tune. Since America has become the predominant partner in the Allied cause, she is partner also, in Britain’s guilt. The Allies have no right to call their cause to be morally superior to the Nazi cause, so long as they hold in custody the fairest part and one of the most ancient nations of the earth.”

—M. D.

THROW AWAY THE CARCASS

"I say that the British Power in India should go to-day for the world peace, for China, for Russia and for the Allied cause.....To-day the Allies are carrying the burden of a huge corpse—a huge nation lying prostrate at the feet of Britain, I would even say at the feet of the Allies."

Everyone knows the story of Sindbad the Sailor, and the Old Man of the Sea who would not get off his shoulders. To say that Sindbad is India and that the Old Man of the Sea is Britain would cause no surprise. It is a perfectly apt simile, and for Britain to expect India's co-operation is like the Old Man of the Sea asking for Sindbad's co-operation in resisting an assailant without getting off Sindbad's back.

But, in a recent interview, Gandhiji reversed the simile and likened Britain and the Allies to Sindbad carrying a heavy carcass on his shoulders, and appealed to them to throw away the carcass if they would have victory.

"India has no heart in the war, in fact, she has her eyes on Japan. You may to-day be denuding her of her resources, but they are the resources of an unwilling India. India is, thus, a corpse—a heavy carcass—of which the weight might make your victory impossible. If by some chance England comes to her senses—the Allies come to their senses—and say: 'Let us get rid of this carcass,' that single act will give them a power which no military skill or resources and no amount of American help can give them." This is what Gandhiji said to Mr. Preston Grover, the representative of the Associated Press of America, who came specially from Delhi to have his interview.

It was as usual a day of broiling heat and heavy work. Gandhiji had offered to go to Wardha to have his talk with the Maulana who has been keeping indifferent health, rather than let him go to Sevagram. As we went, the

car broke down about six furlongs from Sethji's bungalow. Gandhiji got down and began to walk in the blazing sun. I could not keep pace with him and collapsed after I had walked a furlong or two. It was only when I got a *tonga*, on coming round, that I got to the bungalow when Gandhiji had already got there. He evidently can bear this terrible heat, as it is nothing compared to the blazing furnace that is burning within him, and it was to share it with the Maulana that he went to Wardha. After a full two hours' talk with the Maulana and Jawaharlalji, he asked Mr. Grover to come in, and poured out his heart's agony before him for about an hour. "There has been a great deal of questioning in America and India as to the nature of your activities during the balance of the war. I should like to know what it will be like," said Mr. Grover. "But can you tell me when the war will end?" said Gandhiji laughing.

IT WILL BE FELT BY THE WORLD

Coming to the point, Mr. Grover said again: "There is a good deal of speculation that you are planning some new movement. What is the nature of it?"

"It depends on the response made by the Government and the people. I am trying to find our public opinion here and also the reaction on the world outside."

"When you speak of the response, you mean response to your new proposal?"

"Oh yes," said Gandhiji, "I mean response to the proposal that the British Government in India should end to-day. Are you startled?"

"I am not," said Mr. Grover, "you have been asking for it and working for it."

"That's right. I have been working for it for years. But now it has taken definite shape and I say that the British Power in India should go to-day for the world peace, for China, for Russia and for the Allied cause. I shall explain to you how it advances the Allied cause. Complete independence frees India's energies, frees her to make her contribution to the world crisis. To-day the Allies are carrying the burden of a huge corpse—a

huge nation lying prostrate at the feet of Britain, I would even say at the feet of the Allies. For America is the predominant partner, financing the war, giving her mechanical ability and her resources which are inexhaustible. America is, thus, a partner in the guilt."

"Do you see a situation when after full independence is granted, American and Allied troops can operate from India?" Mr. Grover pertinently asked.

"I do," said Gandhiji. "It will be only then that you will see real co-operation. Otherwise, all the effort you put up may fail. Just now, Britain is having India's resources because India is her possession. To-morrow whatever the help, it will be real help from a *free* India."

"You think India in control interferes with Allied action to meet Japan's aggression?"

"It does."

"When I mentioned Allied troops operating, I wanted to know whether you contemplated complete shifting of the present troops from India?"

"Not necessarily."

"It is on this that there is a lot of misconception."

"You have to study all I am writing. I have discussed the whole question in the current issue of *Harijan*. I do not want them to go, on condition that India becomes entirely free. I cannot, then, insist on their withdrawal, because I want to resist with all my might the charge of inviting Japan to India."

"But suppose your proposal is rejected, what will be your next move?"

"It will be a move which will be felt by the whole world. It may not interfere with the movement of British troops, but it is sure to engage British attention. It would be wrong of them to reject my proposal and say India should remain a slave in order that Britain may win or be able to defend China. I cannot accept that degrading position. India, free and independent, will play a prominent part in defending China. To-day, I do not think she is rendering any real help to China. We have followed the non-embarrassment policy so far. We will follow it even now. But we cannot allow the

British Government to exploit it in order to strengthen the stranglehold on India. And to-day it amounts to that. The way, for instance, in which the thousands are being asked to vacate their homes with nowhere to go to, no land to cultivate, no resources to fall back upon, is the reward of our non-embarrassment. This should be impossible in any free country. I cannot tolerate India submitting to this kind of treatment. It means greater degradation and servility, and when a whole nation accepts servility, it means good-bye for ever to freedom."

INDIA'S GAINS FROM BRITISH VICTORY?

"All you want is the civil grip relaxed. You won't then hinder military activity?" was Mr. Grover's next question.

"I do not know. I want unadulterated independence. If the military activity serves but to strengthen the stranglehold, I must resist that too. I am no philanthropist to go on helping at the expense of my freedom. And what I want you to see is that a corpse cannot give any help to a living body. The Allies have no moral cause for which they are fighting, so long as they are carrying this double sin on their shoulders, the sin of India's subjection and the subjection of the Negroes and African races."

Mr. Grover tried to draw a picture of a free India *after* an Allied victory. Gandhiji mentioned, as the boons of the last World War, the Rowlatt Act and martial law and Amritsar. Mr. Grover mentioned more economic and industrial prosperity—by no means due to the grace of the Government, but by the force of circumstances, and economic prosperity was a step further forward to *Swaraj*. Gandhiji said the few industrial gains were wrung out of unwilling hands, he set no store by such gains after this war, those gains may be further shackles; and it was a doubtful proposition whether there would be any gains—when one had in mind the industrial policy that was being followed during the war. Mr. Grover did not seriously press the point.

WHAT CAN AMERICA DO ?

"You don't expect any assistance from America in persuading Britain to relinquish her hold on India," asked Mr. Grover, half-incredulously.

"I do, indeed," replied Gandhiji.

"With any possibility of success?"

"There is every possibility, I should think," said Gandhiji. "I have every right to expect America to throw her full weight on the side of justice, if she is convinced of the justice of the Indian cause."

"You don't think the American Government is committed to the British remaining in India?"

"I hope not. But British diplomacy is so clever that America, even though it may not be committed, and in spite of the desire of President Roosevelt and the people to help India, it may not succeed. British propaganda is so well organized in America against the Indian cause that the few friends India has there have no chance of being effectively heard. And the political system is so rigid, that public opinion does not affect the administration."

"It may, slowly," said Mr. Grover apologetically.

"Slowly?" said Gandhiji. "I have waited long, and I can wait no longer. It is a terrible tragedy that 40 crores of people should have no say in this war. If we have the freedom to play our part, we can arrest the march of Japan and save China."

WHAT DO YOU PROMISE TO DO ?

Mr. Grover, having made himself sure that Gandhiji did not insist on the literal withdrawal of either the British or the troops, now placing himself in the position of the Allies, began to calculate the gains of the bargain. Gandhiji, of course, does not want independence as a reward of any services, but as a right and in discharge of a debt long overdue.

"What specific things would be done by India to save China," asked Mr. Grover, "if India is declared independent?"

"Great things, I can say at once, though I may not be able to specify them to-day," said Gandhiji. "For, I do not know what Government we shall have. We have various political organizations here which I expect would be able to work out a proper national solution. Just now they are not solid parties, they are often acted upon by the British Power, they look up to it and its frown or favour means much to them. The whole atmosphere is corrupt and rotten. Who can foresee the possibilities of a corpse coming to life? At present, India is a dead-weight to the Allies."

"By dead-weight, you mean a menace to Britain and to American interests here?"

"I do. It is a menace in that you never know what sullen India will do at a given moment."

"No, but I want to make myself sure that if genuine pressure was brought to bear on Britain by America, there would be solid support from yourself?"

"Myself? I do not count—with the weight of 73 years on my shoulders. But you get the co-operation—whatever it can give willingly—of a free and mighty nation. My co-operation is, of course, there. I exercise what influence I can by my writings from week to week. But India's is an infinitely greater influence. To-day, because of widespread discontent, there is not that active hostility to Japanese advance. The moment we are free, we are transformed into a nation prizing its liberty and defending it with all its might and, therefore, helping the Allied cause."

"May I concretely ask—will the difference be the difference that there is between what Burma did and what, say, Russia is doing?" said Mr. Grover.

"You might put it that way. They might have given Burma independence after separating it from India. But they did nothing of the kind. They stuck to the same old policy of exploiting her. There was little co-operation from Burmans; on the contrary, there was hostility or inertia. They fought neither for their own cause, nor for the Allied cause. Now take a possible contingency. If the Japanese compel the Allies to retire from India to a

safer base, I cannot say to-day that the whole of India will be up in arms against the Japanese. I have a fear that they may degrade themselves as some Burmans did. I want India to oppose Japan to a man. If India was free she would do it, it would be new experience to her, in twenty-four hours her mind would be changed. All parties would, then, act as one man. If this live independence is declared to-day, I have no doubt India becomes a powerful ally."

Mr. Grover raised the question of communal disunion as a handicap, and himself added that before the American Independence there was not much unity in the States. "I can only say that as soon as the vicious influence of the third party is withdrawn, the parties will be face to face with reality and close up ranks," said Gandhiji. "Ten to one my conviction is that the communal quarrels will disappear as soon as the British Power that keeps us apart disappears."

WHY NOT DOMINION STATUS ?

"Would not Dominion Status declared to-day do equally well?" was Mr. Grover's final question.

"No good," said Gandhiji instantaneously. "We will have no half measures, no tinkering with independence. It is not independence that they will give to this party or that party, but to an indefinable India. It was wrong, I say, to possess India. The wrong should be righted by leaving India to herself."

C. R.

"May I finally ask you about your attitude to Rajaji's move?"

"I have declared that I will not discuss Rajaji in public. It is ugly to be talking *at* valued colleagues. My differences with him stand, but there are some things which are too sacred to be discussed in public."

But Mr. Grover had not so much in mind the Pakistan controversy as C. R.'s crusade for the formation of a national government. Mr. Grover had the discernment to make it clear that C. R. "could not be motivated by

the British Government. His position happens to harmonize with them."

"You are right," said Gandhiji. "It is fear of the Japanese that makes him tolerate the British rule. He would postpone the question of freedom until after the war. On the contrary, I say that if the war is to be decisively won, India must be freed to play her part to-day. I find no flaw in my position. I have arrived at it after considerable debating within myself. I am doing nothing in hurry or anger. There is not the slightest room in me for accommodating the Japanese. No, I am sure that India's independence is not only essential for India, but for China and the Allied cause."

"What are the exact steps by which you will save China?"

"The whole of India's mind would be turned away from Japan. To-day it is not. C. R. knows it, and it worries him as it should worry any sane patriot. It worries me no less, but it drives me to a contrary conclusion. India lying at the feet of Great Britain may mean China lying at the feet of Japan. I cannot help using this language. I feel it. You may think it startling and big. But why should it be startling? Think of 400 million people hungering for freedom. They want to be left alone. They are not savages. They have an ancient culture, ancient civilization, such variety and richness of languages. Britain should be ashamed of holding these people as slaves. You may say: 'You deserve it!' If you do, I will simply say it is not right for any nation to hold another in bondage."

"I agree," whispered Mr. Grover.

"I say even if a nation should want to be in bondage, it should be derogatory to one's dignity to keep it in bondage. But you have your own difficulties. You have yet to abolish slavery."

"In United States, you mean?"

"Yes, your racial discrimination, your lynch law and so on. But you don't want me to remind you of these things."—M. D.

'WITHDRAWAL' EXPLAINED

"Britain does not deserve to win the war on the ground of justice if she is fighting to keep her Asiatic and African possessions. I am not unaware of the tremendous change in Britain's economic policy that the acceptance of my proposal involves. But that change is a vital necessity, if this war is to have a satisfactory ending."

Replying to a correspondent who asked for clarification of his demand for withdrawal, Gandhiji wrote:

The difficulty about the confusion in the public mind by the contemplated stay of the Allied troops in the country is very real. Neither the masses nor even the classes will appreciate the necessity of the military operations of the Allied Powers after the declaration of withdrawal. But if the necessity is proved, the public may be expected to reconcile themselves to the inevitable.

There was obviously a gap in my first writing. I filled it in as soon as it was discovered by one of my numerous interviewers. Non-violence demands the strictest honesty, cost what it may. The public have, therefore, to suffer my weakness, if weakness it may be called. I could not be guilty of asking the Allies to take a step which would involve certain defeat. I could not guarantee fool-proof non-violent action to keep the Japanese at bay. Abrupt withdrawal of the Allied troops might result in Japan's occupation of India and China's sure fall. I had not the remotest idea of any such catastrophe resulting from my action. Therefore, I feel that if, in spite of the acceptance of my proposal, it is deemed necessary by the Allies to remain in India to prevent Japanese occupation, they should do so, subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by the National Government that may be set up after the British withdrawal.

The writer's argument about Britain having no cause left for pursuing the war, if she accepts my proposal and logically follows it in Africa, is sound. But that is the acid

test proposed. India has every right to examine the implications of high-sounding declarations about justice, preservation of democracy and freedom of speech and individual liberty. If a band of robbers have among themselves a democratic constitution in order to enable them to carry on their robbing operations more effectively, they do not deserve to be called a democracy. Is India a democracy? Are the States a democracy? Britain does not deserve to win the war on the ground of justice if she is fighting to keep her Asiatic and African possessions. I am not unaware of the tremendous change in Britain's economic policy that the acceptance of my proposal involves. But that change is a vital necessity, if this war is to have a satisfactory ending.

Who knows if Britain's acceptance of my proposal will not by itself mean an honourable end of the war, resulting in a change even in the mentality of the Axis Powers?

The writer is afraid that my reconciliation to the presence of the British troops would mean a descent on my part from my non-violent position. I hold that my non-violence dictates a recognition of the vital necessity. Neither Britain nor America share my faith in non-violence. I am unable to state that the non-violent effort will make India proof against Japanese or any other aggression. I am not able even to claim that the whole of India is non-violent in the sense required. In the circumstances, it would be hypocritical on my part to insist on the immediate withdrawal of the Allied troops as an indispensable part of my proposal. It is sufficient for me to declare that so far as India is concerned, she does not need troops to defend herself, having no quarrel with Japan. But India must not, by any act of hers short of national suicide, let China down, or put the Allied Powers in jeopardy. So long, therefore, as India lacks faith in the capacity of non-violence to protect her against aggression from without, the demand for the withdrawal of the Allied troops, during the pendency of the war, would itself be an act of violence, if the controllers of the troops hold it to be necessary for their defence to keep them in India for that purpose and that alone.

DELIBERATE DISTORTION

"Any person, however great he may be, who distorts the proposals I have made, will be condemned by history as an enemy of the Allied cause."

Replying to the criticism of the London Times on his latest proposal, Gandhiji said:

Every time nationalists have suggested solutions, however sound intrinsically, there has been distortion of their speeches and writings, followed later by persecution. My latest proposal conceived in the friendliest spirit¹ and, in my opinion intrinsically sound, has already begun to be distorted. I regard my proposal as fool-proof. The operations of the Allied forces against Japanese aggression have been left intact under my proposal which amounts to this, that Britain should become true to her declaration, withdraw from India as conqueror and, therefore, controller of her destiny, and leave India to shape her own destiny without the slightest interference. This, as I can see,

¹ *Disapproving of Sir Stafford Cripps' description of his appeal for the withdrawal of the British Power as a walk-out, Gandhiji wrote :*

"The appeal has been made in no offensive mood. It is the friendliest thing that I could do. It is conceived in the interest of the Allied cause. I have made it in a purely non-violent spirit and as a non-violent step. But this is merely personal to me. It is necessary to remember in considering my proposal that it is essentially a non-violent gesture. Such non-violence as India has, or may have, becomes impotent without the withdrawal of the British Power—even as that part of India which will put up an armed fight becomes impotent. The step that I have conceived overcomes all difficulties, shuts all controversy about violence and non-violence and immediately frees India to offer her best help to the Allied cause, and more especially to China which is in imminent danger. I am convinced that the independence of India, which the withdrawal of the British Power involves, would ensure China's freedom and put the Allied cause on an unassailable basis."—*Harijan* : June 28, 1942.

puts her case on a moral basis and gives her in India a great ally not in the cause of Imperialism, but in the cause of human freedom. If there is anarchy in India, Britain alone will be responsible, *not* I. What I have said is that I would prefer anarchy to the present slavery and consequent impotence of India. Any person, however great he may be, who distorts the proposals I have made, will be condemned by history as an enemy of the Allied cause. Sir Stafford Cripps' proposals have been weighed by India and after great deliberation rejected by all parties. It is an insult to India to repeat those proposals as the final word of British statesmanship.

A FALLACY

"The refusal to allow the Allied troops to operate on the Indian soil can only add to the irritation already caused by my proposal. The first is inevitable, the second would be wanton."

Q. You consider it a vital necessity in terms of non-violence to allow the Allied troops to remain in India. You also say that, as you cannot present a fool-proof non-violent method to prevent Japanese occupation of India, you cannot throw the Allies over-board. But, don't you consider that the non-violent force created by your action, which will be sufficient to force the English to withdraw, will be sufficiently strong to prevent Japanese occupation also? And is it not the duty of a non-violent resister to equally consider it a vital necessity to see that his country, his home and his all are not destroyed by allowing two foreign mad bulls to fight a deadly war on his soil?

A. There is an obvious fallacy in the question. I cannot all of a sudden produce in the minds of Britishers, who have been for centuries trained to rely upon their muscle for their protection, a belief which has not made a very visible impression even on the Indian mind. Non-violent force must not act in the same way as violence. The refusal to allow the Allied troops to operate on the Indian soil can only add to the irritation already caused by my proposal. The first is inevitable, the second would be wanton.

Again, if the withdrawal is to take place, it won't be due merely to the non-violent pressure. And, in any case, what may be enough to affect the old occupant, would be wholly different from what would be required to keep off the invader. Thus, we can disown the authority of the British rulers by refusing taxes and in a variety of ways. These would be inapplicable to withstand the Japanese onslaught. Therefore, whilst we may be ready to face the Japanese, we may not ask the Britishers to give up their position of vantage merely on the unwarranted supposition

that we would succeed by mere non-violent effort in keeping off the Japanese.

Lastly, whilst we must guard ourselves in our own way, our non-violence must preclude us from imposing on the British a strain which must break them. That would be a denial of our whole history for the past twenty-two years.

OH! THE TROOPS

"It will be most assuredly an event of the century and may be a turning point in the war, if Britain can honestly perform the act of renouncing India with all that the renunciation would mean."

I have to pay a heavy price for having drawn up an entrancing picture of a Free India without a single British soldier. Friends are confounded now to discover that my proposal admits of the presence of British and even American troops under any circumstance at all. In vain do I argue that the Allied troops, if they remain, will do so not to exercise authority over the people, or at India's expense, but they will remain under treaty with the Government of Free India at the United Nations' expense for the sole purpose of repelling Japanese attack and helping China.

It has been pointed out that not to consent to the Allied troops remaining in India during the period of the war is to hand over India and China to Japan, and to ensure the defeat of the Allied Powers. This could never have been contemplated by me. The only answer, therefore, to give was to suffer the presence of the troops, but under circumstance the reverse of the existing. They will remain under permission of Free India, and not at all in the role of masters but of friends.

My proposal presupposes shedding of all fear and distrust. If we have confidence in ourselves, we need neither fear nor suspect the presence of Allied troops.

May I suggest also that it is altogether premature and wrong to pore over the weakest points of a very difficult project which may not be accepted even with the troops remaining in India. It will be most assuredly an event of the century and may be a turning point in the war, if Britain can honestly perform the act of renouncing India with all that the renunciation would mean. The virtue

and the value of the renunciation, in my opinion, will not be affected in the least, because the Allied troops will be operating in India with the sole object of preventing Japanese attack. After all, India is as much interested as the Allies in warding off the attack, and yet under my proposal India will not have to pay a single pie over the expenses of the troops.

As I have already said in the previous issue of *Harijan*, the British acceptance of my proposal may itself lead to a most honourable peace and hence automatic withdrawal of the troops. I would, therefore, ask the doubters to concentrate their attention upon the grandeur of the proposed renunciation and help to the utmost of their power the fruition of the great act. Let them not dread the presence of the troops in India for the purpose indicated, but regard it as an inevitable part of the proposal so as to make it not only justifiable but fool-proof. So far as I can see, Free India will run no risk by their presence. Her freedom will certainly suffer no diminution thereby.

The implications of my proposal are:

- (1) India becomes free of all financial obligation to Britain;
- (2) The annual drain to Great Britain stops automatically;
- (3) All taxation ceases except what the replacing government imposes or retains;
- (4) The dead-weight of an all-powerful authority keeping under subjection the tallest in the land is lifted at once;
- (5) In short, India begins a new chapter in her national life, as I shall hope, to affect the fortunes of the war with non-violence as her predominant sanction. This non-violence will no longer take the shape of non-co-operation and the like. It will express itself in her ambassadors going to the Axis Powers, not to beg for peace but to show them the futility of war for achieving an honourable end. This can only be done if and when Britain sheds the gains of perhaps the most organized and successful violence the world has seen.

All this may not come to pass. I do not mind. It is worth fighting for, it is worth staking all that the nation has.

FRIENDS' AMBULANCE UNIT IN INDIA

"You do not need the consent of a slave to give him freedom. The slave often hugs the chains of slavery. They become part of his flesh. You have to tear them asunder and throw them away. You must withdraw because it is your duty to do so, and not wait for the unanimous consent of all the sections or groups in India."

The Friends' Ambulance Unit is a voluntary body of workers who share Quaker views on peace and war. Conscientiously unable to help in the war directly or in organizations set up to achieve ends by violent means, they still would share the sorrows and sufferings of a war-torn world and are, therefore, pledged to relieve suffering and heal the wounds of war, wherever their services may be acceptable. They number about 700, are all unpaid, receiving only board and lodging, and pledged to go wherever they may be required. They have all received training in first aid, stretcher work, and anti-gas, and also training in hospitals. The Unit has worked, during the present war, in London and many parts of England, in Finland, Norway and Greece, in Central China and on the Burma Road, in Libya and Syria, and in hospitals in Germany, Poland and Hongkong.

After Japan entered the war, some of the members felt that their experience in the bombed areas in Britain might prove of value in India, and it was proposed to send a small band to work, if possible, in co-operation with the volunteer agencies here. Accordingly a band of eight (six men and two women), with Prof. Horace Alexander of Woodbrooke College (Birmingham) as the leader, were told off to go to India, and Prof. Alexander and Mr. Richard Symonds have already arrived. Prof. Alexander is an old friend, belonging as he does to the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and having been a sympathetic student of Indian affairs for several years. Mr. Symonds is much

younger and is not long down from Oxford, but has had considerable experience of the work to which they have been called, having organized medical aid in London shelters and done active evacuation work. The others who have not yet arrived and are still on the high seas are Messrs Alec Horsefield, Brian Croves, Kenneth Criffin, Glanmore Davies, and Miss Jeanie Coffie and Miss Pamela Bankhart, who have all had experience of work in the bombed areas in England.

"We were wondering if it was auspicious for an English party to arrive in India, when you were asking the British to withdraw," said Prof. Alexander with a kindly smile. "Agatha¹ suggested that we might have a party from India to work with us, and make of our party a mixed party."

"My first writing," said Gandhiji, "did, I am afraid, give rise to that kind of fear. That was because I had not given expression to the whole idea in my mind. It is not my nature to work out and produce a finished thing all at once. The moment a question was asked me, I made it clear that no physical withdrawal of every Englishman was meant, I meant the withdrawal of the British domination. And so every Englishman in India can convert himself into a friend—as you have come as Friends—and remain here. The condition is that every Englishman has to dismount from the horse he is riding and cease to be monarch of all he surveys and identify himself with the humblest of us. The moment he does it, he will be recognized as a member of the family. His role as a member of the ruling caste must end for ever. And so when I said 'withdraw', I meant 'withdraw as masters.' The demand for withdrawal had another implication. You have to withdraw, irrespective of the wishes of anybody here. You do not need the consent of a slave to give him freedom. The slave often hugs the chains of slavery. They become part of his flesh. You have to tear them asunder and throw them away. You must withdraw because it is

¹ Miss Agatha Harrison, Gandhiji's London hostess at the time of Second Round Table Conference.

your duty to do so, and not wait for the unanimous consent or all the sections or groups in India.

"There is thus no question of the moment being inauspicious for you. On the contrary, if you can assimilate my proposal, it is the most auspicious moment for you to arrive in India. You will meet many Englishmen here. They may have entirely misunderstood what I have said, and you have to explain to them what exactly I want them to do.

"Really speaking, therefore, this should become the major part of your mission, and even the India Office who facilitated your coming here cannot possibly misunderstand you. You have therefore, not only the humanitarian mission—there may not be any bombing here, and in this vast country even if there is bombing, you may not be able to reach everywhere—but you have also this peculiar mission of interpretation and reconciliation. And it is well, perhaps, that your mission begins with me. Begin it with finding out what exactly is at the back of my mind by putting to me all the questions that may be agitating you."

That put both the friends at ease and prompted them to try to understand the whole of the background of Gandhiji's mind. And, in this connection, I may mention a curious but very significant fact. When Sir Stafford Cripps' mission was announced, Prof. Horace Alexander and Miss Agatha Harrison had sent Gandhiji a cable reminding him of the phrase Gandhiji himself had used, *viz.*, "Andrews' legacy", meaning thereby that in memory of Andrews the best Englishmen and the best Indians should come together to bring about a permanent understanding between England and India. "Here," their cable seemed to say in effect, "is one of the best Englishmen coming to India. You had better settle with him, as there is a great opportunity."

It was in reply to this cable that Gandhiji wrote a long letter to Prof. Horace Alexander soon after the failure of the Cripps' mission,—a letter in which he gave expression for the first time to the demand for British withdrawal. He had not discussed it with any soul on earth, but as he was writing the letter the thing that was, so to say, cooking

in his mind ever since his return from Delhi came to his pen. "Sir Stafford" he said in that letter, "has come and gone. How nice it would have been if he had not come with that dismal mission.....How could the British Government at this critical hour have behaved as they did? Why should they have sent proposals without discussing them with the principal parties? Not one single party was satisfied. In trying to please all, the proposals pleased none.

"I talked to him frankly but as a friend, if for nothing else, for Andrews' sake. I told him that I was speaking to him with Andrews' spirit as my witness. I made suggestions, but all to no avail. As usual, they were not practical. I had not wanted to go. I had nothing to say being 'anti-all-wars.' I went because he was anxious to see me. All this I mention in order to give you the background. I was not present throughout the negotiations with the Working Committee. I came away. You know the result. It was inevitable. The whole thing has left a bad taste in the mouth."

And now comes the key paragraph: "My firm opinion is that the British should leave India now in an orderly manner and not run the risk that they did in Singapore, Malaya and Burma. That act would mean courage of a high order, confession of human limitations, and right doing by India."

The letter was sent by Air Mail on the 22nd April, but Prof. Horace Alexander had left England before it could reach him. He was agreeably surprised when he found that he was the first person with whom Gandhiji had shared his great thought.

Gandhiji's talk was almost a commentary on the parts of the letter I have quoted. "You will see that I have used the words 'orderly withdrawal.' I had, when I used the phrase, Burma and Singapore in mind. It was a disorderly withdrawal from there. For they left Burma and Malaya neither to God, nor to anarchy, but to the Japanese. Here I say: 'Don't repeat that story here. Don't leave India to Japan, but leave India to Indians in an orderly manner,'" said he, concluding a long talk. The whole talk, even as the letter I have reproduced, was inspired by

the spirit of C. F. A. and the idea of asking the British to withdraw was conceived in the friendliest spirit, as it was done with a remembrance of C.F.A., and all his noble work. As Gandhiji said: "So you have now to do what Andrews did—understand me, pitilessly cross-examine me, and then if you are convinced, be my messenger". Prof. Alexander felt overwhelmed and said: "We dare not assume his mantle. We can but try."

They propose to meet various people and see things for themselves before they decide where to start work. And they should take a little time, as their companions will not arrive until a week or more. Their work will be in co-operation both with the A.R.P. agencies and voluntary organizations, as the case may be.

THE WARDHA INTERVIEW

"If the British see, however late, the wisdom of recognizing the Independence of India, without reference to the various parties, all things are possible. But the point I want to stress is this : *viz.*, that there is no room left for negotiations in the proposal for withdrawal. Either they recognize Independence, or they don't."

Soon after the final meeting of the Working Committee on Tuesday, the 14th July, Gandhiji met the various representatives of the Press—Indian and foreign—and gave them a joint interview. To take up the last question first. Gandhiji made it clear that the Working Committee had worked on his own draft, there had been a lot of give and take, and accommodation. "Of course, if the resolution¹ had not met with my approval," he added, "it would not have been passed. Whether it wholly meets with my approval or not, is a difficult question to answer. It is not humanly possible for a group of people to agree on every sentence and every word. There always is room for accommodation, but I must say that the Working Committee has been most considerate to me."

A MASS MOVEMENT

"Is it possible," asked the A. P. (America) representative, "for you to tell us the things you might do after the All-India Congress Committee meets and adopts the W. C. Resolution?"

"Is not that question a little premature? Supposing the A. I. C. C. vetoes the resolution, the whole thing wears a different aspect. But you may know that it will be a mass movement of a strictly non-violent character, and then you can fill in the details. It will include all that a mass movement can include."

¹See *Appendix*.

"Will you include closing of liquor shops and foreign cloth shops?"

"It will depend on the circumstances. I don't want rioting as a direct result. If in spite of all precautions rioting does take place, it cannot be helped." This question was not fully developed. It could not be, in the nature of things. The questioner meant, perhaps, picketing and peaceful persuasion. Gandhiji had in mind, perhaps, looting of cloth shops—as there has been looting of grain shops—and so on. If these things take place, they will be the direct product of the economic situation and not of the movement.

IF IMPRISONED ?

"Will you court imprisonment?"

"I am not going to court imprisonment. The struggle does not involve courting imprisonment. It is too soft a thing. We had, no doubt, made it a business to court imprisonment up to now, but there will be no such thing this time. My intention is to make the thing as short and swift as possible."

Quick came another question: "Will you resort to fasting if sent to jail?"

"It is not my desire this time, as I have said, to court imprisonment. But if I am dragged into jail, it is difficult to say what I may do. But I *can* fast, as I have fasted before now, though I should try to avoid such an extreme step so far as possible."

"Do you hope that negotiations may be opened by the British Government?"

NEGOTIATIONS ?

"They may, but with whom they will do it, I do not know. For, it is not a question of placating one party or other. For it is the unconditional withdrawal of the British Power, without reference to the wishes of any party, that is our demand. The demand is, therefore, based on its justice. Of course, it is possible that the British may negotiate a withdrawal. If they do, it will be a feather in their cap. Then, it will cease to be a case for with-

drawal. If the British see, however late, the wisdom of recognizing the Independence of India, without reference to the various parties, all things are possible. But the point I want to stress is this : *viz.*, that there is no room left for negotiations in the proposal for withdrawal. Either they recognize Independence, or they don't. After that recognition many things can follow. For by that one single act, the British representatives will have altered the face of the whole landscape and revived the hope of the people which has been frustrated times without number. Therefore, whenever that great act is performed on behalf of the British people, it will be a red-letter day in the history of India and the world. And, as I have said, it can materially affect the fortunes of war."

"After the recognition of Free India, it starts to function at once?"

"Yes, from the very next moment. For, independence will be not on paper, but in action. But your next legitimate question would be—'How will Free India function?' And because there was that knot, I said: 'Leave India to God or anarchy.' But in practice what will happen is this—If withdrawal takes place in perfect good-will, the change will be effected without the slightest disturbance. People would have to come to their own without disturbance. Wise people from among the responsible sections will come together and will evolve a Provisional Government. Then, there will be no anarchy, no interruption, and a crowning glory."

SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

"Can you visualize the composition of the Provisional Government?"

"I do not need to do so. But I am clear that it won't be a party government. All parties—including the Congress—will automatically dissolve. They may function later, and, when they do, they may function complementary to one another, each looking to the other in order to grow. Then, as I have said, all unreality disappears like mist before the morning sun—we don't know how, though we witness the phenomenon every day."

"But" asked two of the Indian correspondents rather impatiently, "looking to all their past record, will the British have the sense to come to terms?"

"Why not? They are human beings and I have never discounted the possibility of human nature's upward growth, and no other nation had ever had to face a freedom movement based, not principally, but wholly on non-violence."

"But there is an apparent contradiction in your resolution," persisted the friends. "The first paragraphs recount the fact that there is no intention on the part of the British to part with power, then suddenly you postulate such a desire on their part!"

"There is nothing inconsistent. The facts are narrated in order to justify the suddenness of the demand for withdrawal. The other paragraphs refer to possibilities. Many things may happen and they may be altogether creditable to the British."

"May not your movement hamper the efforts of the Allies in China?"

"No, since the movement is intended to make common cause with the Allies, it should not hamper the Allied effort."

"But if there is no withdrawal, then disturbances are bound to happen?"

"You see ill-will is already there. It will grow apace. Immediately the movement is started, the ill-will may be changed into good-will if the British people respond. But even if they don't respond, when people make an effort to free themselves from a foreign yoke, ill-will needs no other opening. It takes a healthy turn instead of the bad turn that it has to-day."

"But only last week Mr. Amery reminded us that nothing is going to be done?"

"I am very much afraid that we shall have the misfortune to listen to a repetition of that language in stronger terms, if possible. But it can't change the will of a group of people who are determined to go their way."

FREE INDIA'S CONTRIBUTION

"You desire to have India's freedom in order to help the Allies," was Mr. Edgar Snow's question, and the last question. "Will Free India carry out total mobilization and adopt methods of total war?"

"That question," said Gandhiji, "is legitimate, but it is beyond me. I can only say Free India will make common cause with the Allies. I cannot say that Free India will take part in militarism, or choose to go the non-violent way. But I can say without hesitation that if I can turn India to non-violence, I will certainly do so. If I succeed in converting 40 crores of people to non-violence, it will be a tremendous thing, a wonderful transformation."

"But you won't oppose a militarist effort by civil disobedience?" Mr. Snow pertinently asked.

"I have no such desire. I cannot oppose Free India's will with civil disobedience, it would be wrong."

M. D.

A TWO MINUTES' INTERVIEW

"Britain has to-day no contribution from a free India. Tomorrow, as soon as India is free, she gains moral strength and a powerful ally in a free nation—powerful, morally. This raises England's power to the *n*th degree. This is surely self-proved."

The number of Indian and foreign correspondents in Wardha, at the present moment, is unprecedentedly large, but it is quite natural looking to the momentous issues that the Working Committee have got to decide. But it makes it difficult for one in Gandhiji's health and with his pre-occupations to meet them all. I have had to ask them to wait until the end of the Working Committee's deliberations, when Gandhiji might meet them all at a single interview. But the correspondent of *The Daily Express* (London), who was among the first to arrive and who was not staying until the end, said he would be content with just a couple of minutes' interview, and Gandhiji acceded to his request. He had made up his mind that if the demand for withdrawal, which seemed to gather strength every day, was rejected, there would be some kind of a movement. So he asked :

"Would you say that your movement will make it more difficult or less difficult for us to keep the Japanese out of India?"

"Our movement," said Gandhiji, "will make it more difficult for the Japanese to come in. But, of course, if there is no co-operation from Britain and the Allies, I cannot say."

"But," said Mr. Young, "think of the war as a whole. Do you think that your new movement will help the Allied nations towards victory, which you have said you also desire?"

"Yes, if my submission is accepted."

"What do you mean by your submission?—That

Britain should offer non-violent battle?"

"No, no. My submission that British rule in India should end. If that is accepted, victory for the Allied powers is assured. Then India will become an independent power, and thus a real ally, while now she is only a slave. The result of my movement, if it is sympathetically responded to, is bound to be speedy victory. But if it is misunderstood by the British, and they take up the attitude that they would like to crush it, then they would be responsible for the result, not I."

This was far from convincing Mr. Young. He would not think of any movement with equanimity. So he made an appeal to Gandhiji's sentiment—a sentiment he had more than once expressed:

"Mr. Gandhi, you have been in London yourself. Have you no comment to make on the heavy bombings which the British people have sustained?"

"Oh yes. I know every nook and corner of London where I lived for three years so many years ago, and somewhat of Oxford and Cambridge and Manchester too; but it is London I specially feel for. I used to read in the Inner Temple Library, and would often attend Dr. Parker's sermons in the Temple Church. My heart goes out to the people, and when I heard that the Temple Church was bombed, I bled. And the bombing of the Westminster Abbey and other ancient edifices affected me deeply."

"Then, don't you think," said Mr. Young, "it would be wiser to postpone your movement until we have settled with the Germans and the Japanese?"

"No, because I know you will not settle with the Germans without us. If we were free, we could give you cent per cent co-operation in our own manner. It is curious that such a simple thing is not understood. Britain has to-day no contribution from a free India. Tomorrow, as soon as India is free, she gains moral strength and a powerful ally in a free nation—powerful, morally. This raises England's power to the *n*th degree. This is surely self-proved."

TO MY CRITICS

"It is no use damning me as a dictator like Herr Hitler. He does not argue with his co-workers, if he may be said to have any. He merely issues orders which can only be disobeyed on pain of death or worse. I argue with my friends for days.....My sanction with my friends as well as self-styled enemies has ever been reason and love."

The critics who impute motives to the Working Committee or to me harm the cause they profess to serve. The members of the Working Committee are all seasoned servants of the nation with full sense of their responsibility. It is no use damning me as a dictator like Herr Hitler. He does not argue with his co-workers if he may be said to have any. He merely issues orders which can only be disobeyed on pain of death or worse. I argue with my friends for days. I argued at the last meeting for eight days. The members agreed when their reason was satisfied. My sanction with my friends as well as self-styled enemies has ever been reason and love. It is a travesty of truth, therefore, to compare me with Hitler or to call me dictator in any current sense of the term.

It is an equal travesty of truth to abuse the Congress by calling it a Hindu or communal organization. It is national in the fullest sense of the term. It is a purely political organization with which can undoubtedly be compared the Liberal Party, which is without the slightest communal taint. Unfortunately to-day, although it has politicians who have a record of distinguished service, it has admittedly little or no following in the country by reason of its members holding unpopular views. Thus the Congress remains the sole representative national organization in India with a mass following. Its gains belong not merely to itself, but to the whole nation irrespective of caste or creed or race. It is mischievous and misleading to discredit this organization in America and Great Britain as a com-

munal or pro-Axis or a purely Hindu organization. If it was a pro-Axis organization, it has courage and influence enough to make a public declaration to that effect in disregard of the consequences that might overtake it.

It is not, and has never been, a secret or a violent organization. If it had been either, it would have been suppressed long ago. So much about some manifest misrepresentations.

Now about suppression of relevant Congress position.

Nobody has contended that the demand for withdrawal of British Power is not an inherent right of the nation, irrespective of the demand to the contrary by those who by centuries of habit have lost the sense of freedom. It is said that it is wrong not intrinsically, but because of the Congress declaration of non-embarrassment to ask for such withdrawal at this moment.

The critics conveniently omit to mention the fact that in order to prove its *bona fides* and to prevent the Japanese attack, the Congress has agreed that, in spite of the withdrawal of the British, the Allied troops should remain in India, naturally under a treaty with the Free India Government to be. So long as that Government, provisional or otherwise, has not come into being, there will be no authority to check their operations save their honour. For, by declaring India free, they will have absolved themselves from consulting anybody formally as they have to consult to-day members of their nomination. In this sense, the declaration of Independence leaves them freer to adopt the military measures they may consider necessary.

I know that this is an anomalous position for a free country to be in. But honesty dictates the course. As I have said, and repeat here, the Congress demand is fool-proof. Critics who are anxious to serve the Allies would do well to examine the Congress position and point out flaws, if there are any. Let me inform them that those who have come to me to understand my demand, and who had serious misgivings, went away convinced that it was wholly just, and that, if justice was not done, the Congress would be right in taking action to vindicate its position.

WITH THREE PRESS CORRESPONDENTS

"I believe that India's demand is fundamental. It is indispensable for national existence as I conceive it to be. Therefore, I shall take every precaution I can to handle the movement gently, but I would not hesitate to go to the extremest limit, if I find that no impression is produced on the British Government or the Allied Powers."

Three Press correspondents stayed after the Working Committee in order to have a leisurely interview with Gandhiji for a full clarification of certain questions. They had already been present at the general Press interview the day before, but they thought their countries would be specially interested in certain questions, and they tried to represent the mind of the average man in their respective countries. Mr. Steele represented *The Chicago Daily News*; Mr. Stuart Emeny, *The News Chronicle*; and Mr. Richard Jen, *The Central News Agency of China*.

THE PROGRAMME

Mr. Emeny was full of doubts and fears—at any rate he represented the doubts of the average Englishman. "Could you give me an idea of the plans of your movement? Would it include breach of the Salt Laws, calling out Government servants and labour?"

Gandhiji made a reply to the question: "As I said yesterday, the programme covers every activity of a strictly non-violent character included in a mass movement. Therefore, undoubtedly, the things you have mentioned are included. But it is not my intention to undertake at once any overwhelming programme. I want to watch and see, because whatever may be said to the contrary, even in conducting the movement I want to guard against a sudden outburst of anarchy or a state of things which may be calculated to invite Japanese aggression. I believe that India's demand is fundamental. It is indis-

pensable for national existence as I conceive it to be. Therefore, I shall take every precaution I can to handle the movement gently, but I would not hesitate to go to the extremest limit, if I find that no impression is produced on the British Government or the Allied Powers. I hold it to be legitimate to make the Allied Powers responsible for all that may happen in India, because it is open to them in the interests of the common cause to prevent the happening of anything that might disturb the even course of the war. I think I have sufficiently answered your very pertinent question. I am unable to give you a more detailed answer, not because I want to suppress or shirk it, but I am not ready with a planned programme as yet."

"It will be your biggest movement?"

"Yes, my biggest movement."

TIME LIMIT?

"But if there is no response," asked Mr. Emeny, "what time-limit would you set before launching your campaign?"

"Assuming that the A.I.C.C. confirms the resolution, there will be some time—but not very long—taken. As far as I can see just now, it may be a week or two."

"But will you give time?"

"Of course—as I have always done before launching on every struggle."

"If the Viceroy asks you to go to Delhi, will you accept his invitation?"

"Oh yes. And, then, you forget that the Viceroy and I have become personal friends, if a public man and a Viceroy may be so called."

Knowing what the Government has always done, Mr. Emeny put a plain blunt question: "Will your campaign collapse if Government sent you and thousands of your followers to jail?"

"I hope not," said Gandhiji laughing heartily, "on the contrary, it should gain strength if it has any vitality."

WHY NOT A TRUCE?

And now Mr. Emeny pleaded: "With the enemy at the gates, what is your objection to calling a truce?"

"This struggle has been conceived," said Gandhiji, "in order to avert a catastrophe. At the critical moment, an un-free India is likely to become a hindrance rather than a help. The Congress resolution itself hints at the possibility of a large number of Indians going over to the Japanese side—if they effected a landing on the Indian shores—as we now know happened in Burma, Malaya and, for aught I know, Singapore too. I am of the opinion that this might have been prevented at least so far as Burma is concerned, if she had been made independent. But it was not done. We know the result. We are determined, so far as it is humanly possible, to secure our Independence, so that no Indian worth the name would then think of going over to the Japanese side. It would, then, become as much India's interest, as the Allies' interest, to resist Japanese aggression with all her might."

MORAL DUTY

"But with time so short, don't you think you have a moral duty to stand beside the Russians and the Chinese?" was Mr. Emeny's next question. If Gandhiji was keen on winning a dialectical advantage over his questioner, he might simply have said: "Whose moral duty is greater—that of the Allies to make India free or that of an un-free India to help the Allies?" But, no. He calmly replied: "Don't you see if it was a purely personal question, what you say would have been perfectly possible. But even with the combined influence of every member of the Working Committee, it would have been impossible to enthuse the masses in favour of the Allied cause, which they do not understand, cannot understand."

"But," said Mr. Emeny, "I have the feeling myself that you could, if you would, with your tremendous authority with the masses, do anything. They are sure to listen to you."

"You credit me with an influence which I wish I

had, but I assure you I do not possess. And, in proof of this, I shall give you two solid facts. If I had that influence, you will agree that we would already have won our independence without causing any trouble to anybody. But as you know, I have no influence, nor has the Working Committee, with the Muslim League and the Princes. That is one solid fact. Then, there is another thing. During the last war, as you perhaps know, I had thrown myself heart and soul into it. I had become a voluntary recruiting agent for the British. And I began my agency in the district in which I had just been leading a campaign for agricultural relief with fair success. I should have made great headway there. But I tell you I did not do so. I used to walk miles in the hot burning sun in order to collect recruits and to make an impression on the people about the urgency of it. But I could not. You will see, therefore, that my influence, great as it may appear to outsiders, is strictly limited. I may have considerable influence to conduct a campaign for redress of popular grievances because people are ready and need a helper. But I have no influence to direct people's energy in a channel in which they have no interest."

"Then, what part of the people, you think, will believe in your movement?" put in Mr. Steele.

"I wish I could tell you definitely. It is all problematical. I simply trade on the absolute purity of the cause and the equal purity of the means which are non-violent."

AMERICAN OPINION MAY BE ANTAGONIZED

"Of course, it may. But I have never embarked upon any campaign in the belief that I would have world sympathy at my back. On the contrary, the odds, almost in every case, have been against me. And in the very first *Satyagraha* struggle which started in South Africa, every outward element was hostile to me. I had stated then—though I had no experience of the working of *Satyagraha* that I have now—that a handful though we were in the midst of millions who had no sympathy for us, we had to rely upon our own inner strength and

the absolute justice of our cause. And that sustained us through the long-drawn-out agony lasting eight years. I do not know why I should lose the sympathy of the American people, or the British people, for that matter. And why should they fight shy of a just demand for absolute freedom?"

"Speaking as an American," said Mr. Steele, "I can say that the reaction of many Americans would be that a movement for freedom may be unwise at this moment, for it would lead to complications in India which may be prejudicial to the efficient prosecution of the war."

"This belief is born of ignorance," replied Gandhiji. "What possible internal complication can take place if the British Government declare to-day that India is absolutely independent? It would be, in my opinion, the least risk the Allies could take on behalf of the war effort. I am open to conviction. If anybody could convince me that in the midst of war, the British Government cannot declare India free without jeopardizing the war effort, I should like to hear the argument. I have not as yet heard any cogent one."

OPEN TO CONVICTION

"If you were convinced, would you call off the campaign?"

"Of course. My complaint is that all these good critics talk *at* me, swear *at* me, but never condescend to talk *to* me."

CHINA

The Chinese friend now took his turn. He said: "You have implicit faith in non-violence. But we have seen that armed resistance alone can succeed against the Japanese?"

"China never tried any experiment in non-violence. That the Chinese remained passive for some time is no proof that it was a non-violent attitude. For the first time in history, non-violence instead of being confined to individuals, religious enthusiasts and mystics, has been brought down to the political field and been experimented

on by vast masses of mankind. Just imagine, that instead of a few Indians or even a million or so, all 400,000,000 Indians were non-violent, would Japan make any headway in India, unless they were intent upon exterminating all the four hundred million?"

"If India were made of four hundred million Gandhis"—interrupted Mr. Steele.

"Here," said Gandhiji, "we come to brass tacks. That means India is not sufficiently non-violent. If we had been, there would have been no parties, and there would be no Japanese attack. I know non-violence is limited in both numbers and quality, but deficient as it is in both these respects, it has made a great impression and infused life into the people which was absent before. The awakening that showed itself on April 6, 1919, was a matter of surprise to every Indian. I cannot to-day account for the response we then had from every nook and corner of the country where no public worker had ever been. We had not then gone among the masses, we did not know we could go and speak to them."

"What can Free India do for China?" was Mr. Jen's question.

"If India were to listen to me, she would give non-violent help to China. But I know that will not be. Free India would want to be militarist. She will, then, get all the materials and men she needs—although it appears that China with her vast populations will not need men. To-day un-free India cannot send a single person to China. I go further—Free India can even plead with Japan and Japan will have to listen."

PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

"Can you give me an idea who would take the lead in forming a Provisional Government—you, Congress, or the Muslim League?"

"The Muslim League certainly can; the Congress can. If everything went right, it would be a combined leadership. No *one* party would take the lead."

"Would it be within the present constitutional structure?"

"The constitution will be dead", said Gandhiji. "The Government of India Act of 1935 *is* dead. The I.C.S. would have to go and it might be anarchy, but there *need* be no anarchy, if the British withdraw with goodwill. *Free India Government* would set up a constitution suited to Indian genius, evolved without dictation from outside. But whether India would be cut up into autonomous provinces or not, I do not know. The permanent structure may take time—all the time the war may require. But the Provisional Government may continue to function. It may be somewhat after the pattern of the present government, but with great modifications. The two communities will certainly work in hearty combination. It would be a combination not superimposed, but brought about by internal effort. The dictating factor will not be an outside one, but wisdom. And, I believe, there will be abundant wisdom among us."

"Would the Viceroy cease to exist as such?"

"We shall be friends *even* then, but on a par, and I have no doubt that Lord Linlithgow will welcome the day when he will be one of the people."

WHY NOT TO-DAY?

"Why can't all this be done to-day, without the British withdrawal," said Mr. Emeny returning to the charge.

"The answer is simple. Why can't a prisoner do a thing which a free man can do? You may not have been behind prison bars, but I have been and I know. Imprisonment means civil death, and I suggest to you that the whole of India is civilly dead. The very breath is controlled by British Power. Then, there is another experience that you lack. You have not been a member of a nation that has been under subjection for several centuries. Our *habit* has been that we can never be free. You know the case of Shri Subhas Bose, a man of great self-sacrifice, who might have had a distinguished career in the Indian Civil Service, but who is now an exile because he cannot possibly tolerate this helpless condition and feels that he must seek the help of Germany

and Japan."

"You have said there is no more room for negotiation. Does it mean that you would ignore any conciliatory gesture if it was made?" was the final question put on behalf of all the three.

NEGOTIATIONS ?

"So far as we are concerned, we have closed our hearts. As we have said in our resolution, all hopes have been dashed to pieces. The burden is shifted. But it is open to America, to Britain, to China and even to Russia to plead for India which is pining for freedom. And if an acceptable proposal is made, it would certainly be open to the Congress or any other party to entertain and accept it. It would be churlish on our part if we said: 'We don't want to talk to anybody and we will by our own strong hearts expel the British.' Then, the Congress Committee won't be meeting; there would be no resolutions; and I should not be seeing Press representatives."

—M. D.

APPENDIX

CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE'S RESOLUTION ON BRITISH WITHDRAWAL (*July 14, 1942*)

"Events happening from day to day, and the experience that the people of India are passing through, confirm the opinion of Congressmen that British rule in India must end immediately, not merely because foreign domination, even at its best, is an evil in itself and a continuing injury to the subject people, but because India in bondage can play no effective part in defending herself and in affecting the fortunes of the war that is desolating humanity. The freedom of India is thus necessary not only in the interest of India, but also for the safety of the world and for the ending of Nazism, Fascism, Militarism and other forms of Imperialism, and the aggression of one nation over another.

Ever since the outbreak of the World War, the Congress has studiously pursued a policy of non-embarrassment. Even at the risk of making its *Satyagraha* ineffective, it deliberately gave it a symbolic character in the hope that this policy of non-embarrassment, carried to its logical extreme, would be duly appreciated, and that real power would be transferred to popular representatives, so as to enable the nation to make its fullest contribution towards the realization of human freedom throughout the world, which is in danger of being crushed. It had also hoped that negatively nothing would be done which was calculated to tighten Britain's stranglehold on India.

These hopes have, however, been dashed to pieces. The abortive Cripps proposals showed in the clearest possible manner that there was no change in the British Government's attitude towards India, and that the British hold on India was in no way to be relaxed. In the negotiations with Sir Stafford Cripps, Congress representatives

tried their utmost to achieve a minimum, consistent with the national demand, but to no avail. This frustration has resulted in a rapid and widespread increase of ill-will against Britain and a growing satisfaction at the success of Japanese arms. The Working Committee view this development with grave apprehension, as this, unless checked, will inevitably lead to a passive acceptance of aggression. The Committee hold that all aggression must be resisted, for any submission to it must mean the degradation of the Indian people and the continuation of their subjection. The Congress is anxious to avoid the experience of Malaya, Singapore and Burma and desires to build up resistance to any aggression on, or invasion of, India by the Japanese or any foreign Power. The Congress would change the present ill-will against Britain into good-will, and make India a willing partner in a joint enterprise securing freedom for the nations and peoples of the world and in the trials and tribulations which accompany it. This is only possible if India feels the glow of freedom.

"The Congress representatives have tried their utmost to bring about a solution of the communal tangle. But this has been made impossible by the presence of the foreign Power whose long record has been to pursue relentlessly the policy of divide and rule. Only after the ending of foreign domination and intervention can the present unreality give place to reality, and the people of India, belonging to all groups and parties, face India's problems and solve them on a mutually agreed basis. The present political parties, formed chiefly with a view to attract the attention of and influence the British Power, will then probably cease to function. For the first time in India's history, the realization will come home that the Princes, Jagirdars, Zamindars and propertied and monied classes, derive their wealth and property from the workers in the fields and factories and elsewhere, to whom essentially power and authority must belong. On the withdrawal of British rule from India, responsible men and women of the country will come together to form a Provisional Government, representative of all important sections of the people of India, which will later evolve a scheme

by which a Constituent Assembly can be convened, in order to prepare a constitution for the Government of India acceptable to all sections of the people. Representatives of Free India and representatives of Great Britain will confer together for the adjustment of future relations and for the co-operation of the two countries as allies in the common task of meeting aggression. It is the earnest desire of the Congress to enable India to resist aggression effectively with the people's united will and strength behind it.

In making the proposal for the withdrawal of British rule from India, the Congress has no desire whatsoever to embarrass Great Britain or the Allied Powers in their prosecution of the war, or in anyway to encourage aggression on India, or increase pressure on China by the Japanese or any other Power associated with the Axis group. Nor does the Congress intend to jeopardize the defensive capacity of the Allied Powers. The Congress is, therefore, agreeable to the stationing of the armed forces of the Allies in India, should they so desire, in order to ward off and resist Japanese or other aggression and to protect and help China.

The proposal of withdrawal of the British Power from India was never intended to mean the physical withdrawal of all Britishers from India, and certainly not of those who would make India their home and live there as citizens and as equals with the others. If such a withdrawal takes place with good-will, it would result in the establishing of a stable Provisional Government in India, and co-operation between this Government and the United Nations in resisting aggression and helping China.

The Congress realizes that there may be risks involved in such a course. Such risks, however, have to be faced by any country in order to achieve freedom, and, more especially at the present critical juncture, in order to save the country and the larger cause of freedom the world over from far greater risks and perils.

While, therefore, the Congress is impatient to achieve the national purpose, it wishes to take no hasty step and would like to avoid, in so far as is possible, any course of

action that might embarrass the United Nations. The Congress would be pleased with the British Power to accept the very reasonable and just proposal herein made, not only in the interest of India, but also that of Britain and of the cause of freedom to which the United Nations proclaim their adherence.

Should, however, this appeal fail, the Congress cannot view without the gravest apprehension the continuation of the present state of affairs, involving a progressive deterioration in the situation and the weakening of India's will and power to resist aggression. The Congress will, then, be reluctantly compelled to utilize all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920, when it adopted non-violence as part of its policy for the vindication of the political rights and liberty. Such a widespread struggle would inevitably be under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. As the issues raised are of the most vital and far-reaching importance to the people of India, as well as to the people of the United Nations, the Working Committee refer them to the All-India Congress Committee for final decision. For this purpose the A.I.C.C. will meet in Bombay on August 7, 1942."

TO EVERY JAPANESE

I must confess at the outset that though I have no ill-will against you, I intensely dislike your attack upon China. From your lofty height you have descended to imperial ambition. You will fail to realize that ambition and may become the authors of the dismemberment of Asia, thus unwittingly preventing World Federation and brotherhood without which there can be no hope for humanity.

Ever since I was a lad of eighteen studying in London over fifty years ago, I learnt, through the writings of the late Sir Edwin Arnold, to prize the many excellent qualities of your nation. I was thrilled when in South Africa I learnt of your brilliant victory over Russian arms. After my return to India from South Africa in 1915, I came in close touch with Japanese monks who lived as members of our Ashram from time to time. One of them became a valuable member of the Ashram in Sevagram, and his application to duty, his dignified bearing, his unfailing devotion to daily worship, affability, unruffledness under varying circumstances, and his natural smile, which was positive evidence of his inner peace, had endeared him to all of us. And now that owing to your declaration of war against Great Britain he has been taken away from us, we miss him as a dear co-worker. He has left behind him as a memory his daily prayer and his little drum, to the accompaniment of which we open our morning and evening prayer.

In the background of these pleasant recollections, I grieve deeply as I contemplate what appears to me to be your unprovoked attack against China and, if reports are to be believed, your merciless devastation of that great and ancient land.

It was a worthy ambition of yours to take equal rank with the Great Powers of the World. Your aggression

against China and your alliance with the Axis Powers was surely an unwarranted excess of that ambition.

I should have thought that you would be proud of the fact that that great and ancient people, whose old classical literature you have adopted as your own, are your neighbours. Your understanding of one another's history, tradition, literature should bind you as friends rather than make you the enemies you are to-day.

If I was a free man, and if you allowed me to come to your country, frail though I am, I would not mind risking my health, maybe my life, to come to your country to plead with you to desist from the wrong you are doing to China and the world and, therefore, to yourself.

But I enjoy no such freedom. And we are in the unique position of having to resist an imperialism that we detest no less than yours and Nazism. Our resistance to it does not mean harm to the British people. We seek to convert them. Ours is an unarmed revolt against British rule. An important party in the country is engaged in a deadly but friendly quarrel with the foreign rulers.

But in this they need no aid from Foreign Powers. You have been gravely misinformed, as I know you are, that we have chosen this particular moment to embarrass the Allies when your attack against India is imminent. If we wanted to turn Britain's difficulty into our opportunity, we should have done it as soon as the War broke out nearly three years ago.

Our movement demanding the withdrawal of the British Power from India should in no way be misunderstood. In fact, if we are to believe your reported anxiety for the Independence of India, a recognition of that Independence by Britain, should leave you no excuse for any attack on India. Moreover, the reported profession sorts ill with your ruthless aggression against China.

I would ask you to make no mistake about the fact that you will be sadly disillusioned if you believe that you will receive a willing welcome from India. The end and aim of the movement for British withdrawal is to prepare India, by making her free for resisting all militarist and imperialist ambition, whether it is called British Imperialism,

German Nazism, or your pattern. If we do not, we shall have been ignoble spectators of the militarization of the world in spite of our belief that in non-violence we have the only solvent of the militarist spirit and ambition. Personally, I fear that without declaring the Independence of India, the Allied Powers will not be able to beat the Axis combination which has raised violence to the dignity of a religion. The Allies cannot beat you and your partners unless they beat you in your ruthless and skilled warfare. If they copy it, their declaration that they will save the world for democracy and individual freedom must come to naught. I feel that they can only gain strength to avoid copying your ruthlessness by declaring and recognizing *now* the freedom of India, and turning sullen India's forced co-operation into freed India's voluntary co-operation.

To Britain and the Allies we have appealed in the name of justice, in proof of their professions, and in their own self-interest. To you I appeal in the name of humanity. It is a marvel to me that you do not see that ruthless warfare is nobody's monopoly. If not the Allies, some other Power will certainly improve upon your method and beat you with your own weapon. Even if you win, you will leave no legacy to your people of which they would feel proud. They cannot take pride in a recital of cruel deeds, however skilfully achieved.

Even if you win, it will not prove that you were in the right, it will only prove that your power of destruction was greater. This applies obviously to the Allies too, unless they perform *now* the just and righteous act of freeing India as an earnest and promise of similarly freeing all other subject peoples in Asia and Africa.

Our appeal to Britain is coupled with the offer of Free India's willingness to let the Allies retain their troops in India. The offer is made in order to prove that we do not in any way mean to harm the Allied cause, and in order to prevent you from being misled into feeling that you have but to step into the country that Britain has vacated. Needless to repeat that if you cherish any such idea and will carry it out, we will not fail in resisting you with all the

might that our country can muster. I address this appeal to you in the hope that our movement may even influence you and your partners in the right direction and deflect you and them from the course which is bound to end in your moral ruin and the reduction of human beings to robots.

The hope of your response to my appeal is much fainter than that of response from Britain. I know that the British are not devoid of a sense of justice and they know me. I do not know you enough to be able to judge. All I have read tells me that you listen to no appeal but to the sword. How I wish that you are cruelly misrepresented and that I shall touch the right chord in your heart! Anyway I have an undying faith in the responsiveness of human nature. On the strength of that faith I have conceived the impending movement in India, and it is that faith which has prompted this appeal to you.

I am,

Sevagram, 18-7-'42

Your friend and well-wisher
M. K. GANDHI

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